MY FAVOURITE Enid Blyton STORY BOOK

Teas

My Favourite

Enid Blyton

Story Book

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The GANG

Here is an incident from Enid Blyton's book, THE SIX BAD BOYS. It is about a gang of little ruffians, and what happens to them when they are found out. Bob unfortunately gets involved with them, and becomes one of the gang.

DOWN in the town there was a little gang of boys. The youngest was eight, the oldest was fifteen. There were four of them, Len, Jack, Patrick, a wild Irish boy, and Fred. They met each evening, and every Saturday and Sunday; their favourite playground was a terrace of half-ruined old houses that were to be pulled down.

Under one of these houses was a cellar. The four boys had found it by accident one day, and were delighted.

"Coo! Look here," said Len, peering down some stone steps. "What's this? Underground tunnel or something? Let's play spies! This would be a fine hiding-place!"

It certainly was! Down the stone steps was a small dark stone cellar. The walls were damp, and the place smelt musty and bad. But the boys didn't mind. It was a hidey-hole, a place where nobody could find them.

Jack thought of the idea of making it a proper meeting-place, and proposed that they should try and furnish it in some way.

"We could get a few boxes, see?" he said. "And what about pinching a bit of old carpet from somewhere? And we could get a candle from home. My mum would give me one."

This hidey-hole was one of the greatest pleasures of the little gang. To it they brought their treasures; an old pack of cards, dirty and sticky, Len's little clock-work engine, some comics, a broken candlestick for the candle — and, oddest thing of all, a toy telephone!

This was brought by Fred the eldest boy. He was very proud of it indeed. He had seen it in a toy-shop and had stolen it when the shop was fairly full and nobody had been looking.

He had seen cinema films of rich men at the cinema with telephones crowding their desks, and although he himself had never used a telephone it seemed to him that it was a sign of power and of riches. He must have one too, even though it was only a toy one.

So there stood this little telephone on a box, and the other three boys used to listen with bated breath while Fred talked down it, giving orders to mythical spies or gangsters in an American voice!

Sometimes they brought food down there and

shared it. They planned raids on this garden and that when fruit was in season. They thought out silly tricks, such as knocking at doors and then running away.

Len was the youngest, and his brother was Fred, the fifteen-year-old. Jack was eleven, Patrick was twelve, loud-voiced, fiery-tempered, amusing and cunning.

Len and Fred had no father. They ran completely wild. Their mother didn't bother about them in the least. They cheeked her, took money from her purse when she left it about, and were quite out of control.

Patrick had no mother, only a father who had no time for him, but beat him regularly "just to keep him in order", so he said. Patrick hated his father and kept away from him as much as he could.

Jack had both mother *and* father, and two brothers and three sisters. But as they all lived together in two rooms the boy escaped from home as much as he could.

The two rooms were dirty and smelly and untidy. No one could eat, sleep or read in comfort. Jack hated his home, and though he really loved his mother he couldn't bear her whining voice and miserable face. Poor woman, she had long ago given up all hope of getting a place big enough for her large family, and had lost heart. It was no wonder the boy went to find happiness somewhere else — and to him the little hidey-hole down in the cellar was heaven.

None of the boys was very clever. Patrick had a streak of cunning that the gang found useful, but they had a very healthy respect for the two policeman of that district, and kept out of their way as much as possible.

"We're the Four Terrors Gang," Fred had announced one night. "We aren't afraid of the coppers or anybody, and don't you forget it."

"We aren't afraid of nobody!" said Patrick. It wasn't true, of course. They were afraid of their teachers, the "coppers", one or two shopkeepers who shouted at them — and Patrick was terribly afraid of his father. But they liked

Bob worked hard and well.

pretending that they were quite fearless. For a little while they felt grand and on top of the world!

Fred picked up the receiver of the toy telephone, and at once his three "men" were respectfully silent. They listened eagerly. Fred was grand on the telephone.

"Is that Number 61045?" said Fred, in the short sharp voice he used at times. "This is the Chief here — the chief of the Four Terrors. Here's my orders. You'll take five men with you and the big car, and you'll go to Scarface and get his orders — then you'll . . ."

The one-sided conversation would go on for about two minutes. Then Fred would put down the little receiver and say, "Well, that's settled, boys. The men are on the job!"

The gang always wanted money — money to buy food, money to go to the pictures, which they loved above everything else. To sit in a comfortable seat in a warm place and see

Four boys sat in the candle-lit cellar.

people being chased and shot, to see horses galloping at top speed, cars tearing along at eighty miles an hour, aeroplanes being revved up . . . this was all glorious to them. They didn't have to think, or use their brains at all — they only needed to sit back and look.

It was into this gang that Bob stumbled one night. It was about a week after his mother had begun to take the keys of the house with her, so that he couldn't get in till she came back at half-past six. She left him some cake on a shelf in their little garden shed, but he never touched it.

"Leaving out food for me as if I was the cat next door!" he grumbled to himself. "I'll wait till she comes home, and have supper — proper supper, even if she has to cook it when she's tired."

But it was difficult to fill in the time between afternoon school and half-past six. The evenings were quite dark now, and cold.

"You can always go to the Mackenzies," his mother said to Bob. "They'll be pleased to have you, goodness knows why!"

But Bob didn't go. He was ashamed to have to tell anyone that he couldn't get into his own house. He only went once, when the Mackenzies asked him to come to tea and help with something they were making. He worked so hard and well that Mr. Mackenzie was amazed.

"Come again," he said. "You're good with your hands. You've done twice as much as old Donald here! Come in any time you can. I want to get this ship finished for Christmas."

Most nights Bob wandered down into the town by himself. He kicked his way along moodily, his school satchel on his back. He stared into any shops that were open, and into any lighted living-rooms. Other people's families had a kind of obsession for him.

One night it was pouring with rain. Bob was down in the town. He wondered if he should go home and sit in the shed — or should he go to the Mackenzies? No, he wouldn't. He'd find shelter somewhere.

He came to where some houses were half-tumbled-down. "I'll shelter here," he thought, and scrambled over fallen bricks to find a corner of a ruined room.

And then he suddenly heard a voice coming from below him — a short, staccato voice, issuing orders. Bob stood in astonishment.

"Hallo! That Number 678345? This is the Chief speaking. What do you mean by not coming along when I told you! Here we've been waiting an hour or more! You afraid of being ticked off for failing in that job you had to do? Well, you know what happens to men who're yellow! Unless you come along straight

away, look out for trouble! The Four Terrors will be after you!"

Bob was simply amazed. What was this? Who was speaking like that, just below him?

Then he saw a dim light somewhere down below. He bent down and saw that he was near some stone steps that led underground. He felt excited. What was all this? Had he discovered some secret hiding-place?

He cautiously put one foot on the top step. Then down another step, and another. The rain pelted down all the time, making a great noise, so that it hid the sound of his feet on the rubbly stone steps.

He came in view of the cellar, and stared in astonishment. He saw a little square place with damp walls. Boxes were here and there, and an old piece of damp carpet was on the floor. A big box stood in the middle for a table, and on it was a pile of comics and a candle set in a ginger-beer bottle. On another box stood a telephone — the little toy telephone that Fred was so proud of.

Four boys sat in the candle-lighted cellar. All were reading comics. They hardly ever read anything else. Bob stood and stared: it looked so cosy and exciting and most surprising to him.

Patrick suddenly looked up and saw him. He shouted. "Hey! Look there! Who's that?"

Then Bob had a real brain-wave. He grinned widely and said:

"I'm Number 678345! You telephoned me just now. I've come along to report to the Chief."

There was dead silence in the cellar. All four boys stared at Bob, extremely startled by what he had said. Who was he? How did he know anything about them? Had he really "come to report"?

Fred rose to the occasion. He had sized Bob up at once — a boy a bit above them in station, a daredevil, someone with a sense of humour. He might be useful!

"Come in, Number 678345," he said. "Good thing you came along! I was just going to send someone for you!"

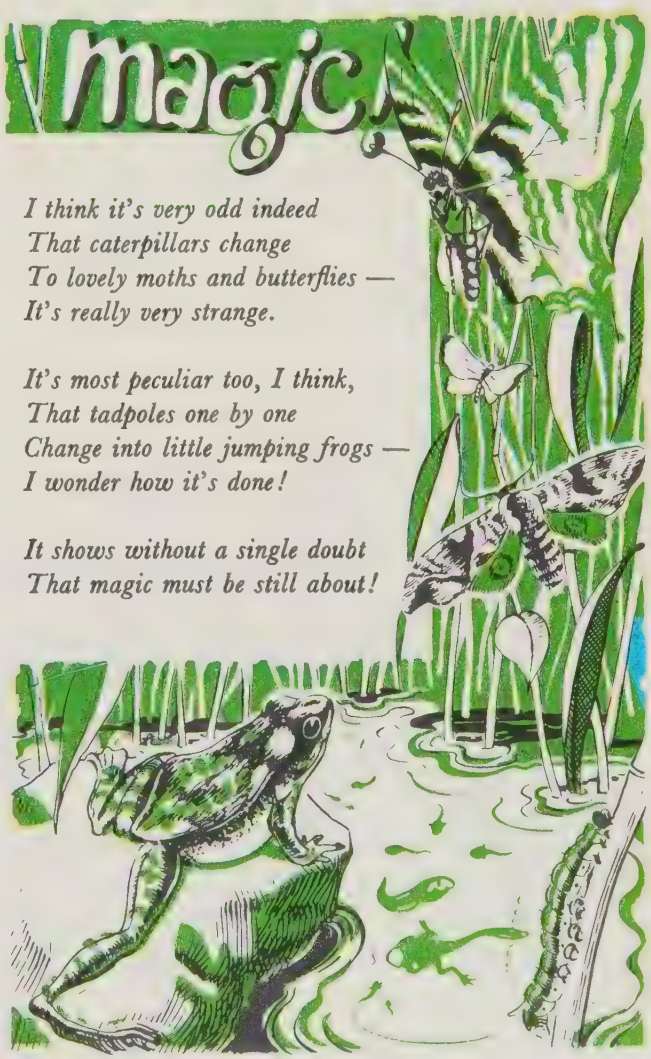
Bob went right into the cellar. Fred took his precious telephone off its box, and pushed the box over to Bob for a seat. "I suppose you heard me telephoning," he said.

"Yes," said Bob. "I couldn't make it out! Were you *really* telephoning with that telephone?"

Fred didn't answer. He sometimes almost persuaded himself that he really *was* telephoning to distant members of the gang, and he didn't want to admit that he wasn't. He lived in a curious world of make-believe.

"It's pouring," said Bob. "Do you mind if I shelter here for a bit! I like this place. Cosy, isn't it — a home from home!"

"Stay as long as you like," said Fred. "We're all pals together here!"



Let's have a Club of our own: 1

(This story, which is in two parts, has been written because so very many children want to know HOW to form a Club, and what to do when it is formed. Well, here in this tale you will read how six ordinary children formed a Club successfully — and you too will be able to do the same, once you have read the story from beginning to end.)

"LET'S have a Club of our own!" said Mark to his friend James. "About five or six of us. It would be fun."

"Right. But how do we set about it?" said James.

"Well — first we'd better choose the members we'd like," said Mark. "NOT Fred — he's never serious about anything. And not Jane — she giggles all the time."

"Have we *got* to have girls?" said James.

"Well — I'd like my twin sister Mollie to be in any club I started," said Mark. "She's not a giggler — she's fun. And she wouldn't mind making badges for us."

"Oh, well — that's something," said James. "That's three of us already. *I'd* like old Dick — he's good at everything, but he never boasts. And he's always ready to do a good turn. He'd be a good club member."

"Yes, I'd like Dick, too," said Mark. "And we'd better have Katie, Mollie's best friend. She's almost like a boy — she climbs trees like a monkey, and runs faster than I can. She's a jolly good sport."

"Right. That's five. Do we want anyone else?" said James. They thought hard for a minute.

"What about Eric?" said Mark. "I know he's lame, because he's had polio — so he might not be able to come for long walks with us, or climb trees — but he's so quick-brained, and so *funny*. Do let's have him."

"Of course," said James. "He's so often left out of things that I bet he'd love to join our Club. All right — that's six of us. The next thing is to ask each of them if they'd *like* to join."

So Mark asked his sister Mollie and her friend Katie, and he asked Eric too, the boy who limped. Mollie was thrilled.

"A club! Oh, I've always wanted to have a club or belong to one," she said. "And how lovely to have Katie in it, too. I wouldn't belong if you didn't ask Katie."

"I know," said Mark. "Anyway, *I* couldn't have a club without *you*, Mollie. I'm asking Eric, too — and James is asking Dick. Six of us."

"How exciting!" said Mollie. "Are we going to do it properly? Have badges, you know, and a meeting-place, and so on?"

"Rather!" said Mark. "We'd better have the first meeting soon, and decide on a name for the club, and all that kind of thing."

They went to find Katie and ask her, and she nodded her head of short curls, and grinned her wide smile. "Thanks — yes. I'd love to join," she said. "Especially as Mollie will be in the club too. When's the first meeting?"

"We thought we'd have a hurried talk in the bicycle shed after school this afternoon," said Mark. "When everyone has gone. Okay?"

"Right," said the girls. Mark went off to find James. He was with Dick and Eric, both of whom were delighted at the idea of a club.

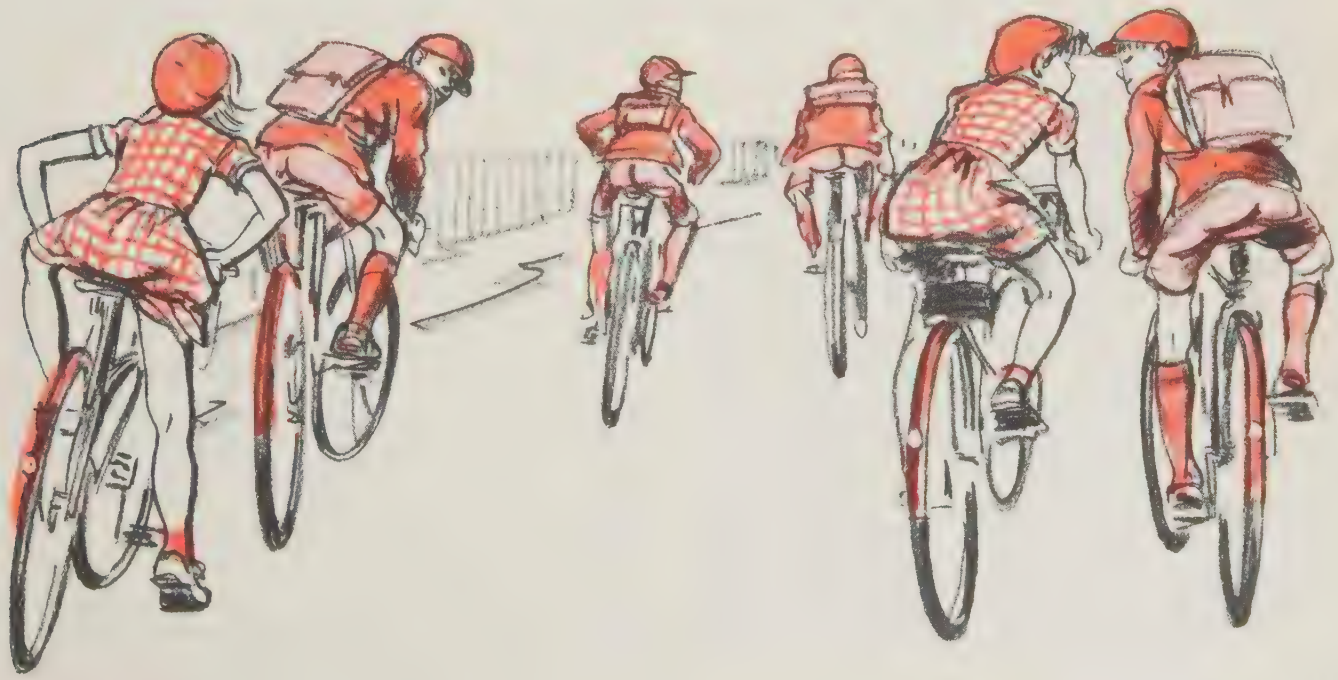
"First meeting after school this afternoon in the bicycle shed," said Mark, and the others nodded. Eric was so proud of being asked, that he could hardly stop smiling all the afternoon. He was lame — he couldn't climb or run or play quick games — and yet the others wanted him in their club! How pleased his mother would be!

After school, the six met for the first time in the bicycle shed. It was deserted, so they were quite on their own. They grinned at one another.

"This isn't a real *meeting*," said Mark. "It's just to arrange a few important things quickly.

After school, the six met in the bicycle shed.

And away went all the six on their bicycles, their minds full of the new idea.



Mollie swept the hen-house out vigorously.

First — we must have a *proper* meeting-place — where we shall be alone and undisturbed. Anyone got any ideas?"

"Yes! What about my garage?" said Dick.

The others considered this, and then James shook his head.

"No. It would be all right if it was empty, but most of the time your father's car is there, Dick. We might scratch it or something, and get into a row. Let me see — has anyone a shed?"

Two of them had, but as one was a tool-shed that was always kept locked, and the other was so tumbledown that it let the rain in, neither was much good!

"It's a puzzle," said Mark, scratching his head to make his thoughts come quickly. "We simply MUST have somewhere to meet."

"Somewhere in the woods, under a big tree?" suggested Katie.

"No — too many people walk in the woods," said Dick. "*I* know — what about that old hen-house of yours, Mark? The one you don't use now?"

Everyone brightened up at once. "Yes! Just the thing," said Mark. "Fancy us not thinking of that, Mollie! Right. That's settled, then. The hen-house is to be our meeting-place — and now, when shall we meet?"

"Soon," said James. "Tomorrow evening! At half-past five. We'll settle all the rules then. Gosh, I must go — look at the time! Well, goodbye, members! We haven't a password or anything yet — but we soon will have! So long!"

And away went all the six on their bicycles, their minds full of their new idea.

At half-past five the next evening Marks'

Lucky

The ducks go out on rainy days,
And never wear goloshes,
And no one calls to them and says
"Put on your macintoshes!"

They never wrap their necks about
With scarves when it is chilly,
And never take umbrellas out,
They wouldn't be so silly.

But when it rains I have to do
Exactly what I'm told,
And put a hat and gloves on too,
In case I catch a cold.

mother was astonished to see so many children trooping down to the old hen-house. She called to Mark and Mollie. "Twins! If you are going to that dirty old hen-shed, do, for goodness' sake, sweep it out. All your clothes will be filthy!"

"Right, Mother," shouted back Mark, and grinned at the others. "I knew Mother would say that — so I've put an old broom down there already! Mollie said she'd clean it up a bit."

The hen-house was not large, and it was certainly dusty. All the members except Mollie had to stand outside while she swept it vigorously.

"Pooh!" said Eric, coughing. "I shall soon cluck like a hen if the dust gets down my throat a bit more."

Soon they were all in the shed. There was only one box there, and a perch for the hens that used to roost in the hut. "We'll bring an old rug or something," said Katie. "And a box or two."

"And put up a shelf to hold our club-things," said Mark.

"What club things?" asked Eric.

"Well — notebooks perhaps, a tin for any money we have for the club — maybe a bottle of orangeade and a tin of biscuits," grinned Mark. "You never know what our mothers will give us, they'll be so glad to be rid of us for a few hours at a time."

"This is going to be fun," said Katie. "Now, let's start properly, Mark."

"Right," said Mark. "The meeting is now begun. We have several things to settle. One is the name of our club. The second is what badge to have, and how to get one for each of us. The third is to choose a leader — or we can choose him — or her — *first*, if you like. Then we'd better have a password — and perhaps a secret signal when we meet. And it would be a good idea to choose some *aim*, as well."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Katie.

"Well — we'll discuss that matter when it comes up," said Mark. "Any other suggestions for discussion?"

"No. Let's choose our leader," said Eric. "I've brought bits of card — *and* pencils — enough for everyone. We can get straight on with it."

"Oh, good!" said Mollie. "I thought I'd be sent back to the house to get things like that! Hand round the little cards, Eric. You always think of everything!"

Eric handed round the slips of cardboard, which he had cut from two post-cards. He also handed out five short pencils.

"Now — write down the name of the one you would like best for leader," said Mark, looking rather solemn. "And remember — it's to be someone you not only like but respect enough to obey and to follow. That's what my father says about leaders. They *must* be liked and they *must* be respected and obeyed. Of course, no one must vote for himself — that's understood!"

Ducks

And with umbrella out I tramp,
In macintosh and coat,
Goloshes to keep out the damp,
And scarf around my throat.

But though the ducks wear none of these,
And never, never will,
I haven't heard them cough or sneeze,
Because they've caught a chill!

And when it's raining very hard,
I wish I had the luck,
To go splish-splashing round the yard
And be a dripping duck!

Soon each of the six was scribbling on his or her bit of card. They folded them in half and handed them to Eric, with their pencils. "Shall I open them and tell you what they say?" said Eric, looking round, and everyone nodded. He opened the first one, and read out loud the name on it.

"This one says *Mark*," he said, and Mark went red with pleasure. Thank goodness *someone* had voted for him." He thought it must be Mollie. Eric unfolded another card, and read out Mark's name again! "*Mark*! Ha — two votes already for you, Mark!"

He opened the third folded card. "This card says *Dick*," he said. "That's two for Mark, one for Dick." He unfolded the other three — and each held the same name!

"Mark! Mark! Mark! Five for you, Mark, and one for Dick," said Eric, smiling all over his face. "Well, it's what I expected. Congratulations!"

"And thanks for voting for *me*, Mark old boy," said Dick, pleased.

"How do you know *Mark* voted for you? It might have been any of us," said Katie.

"No. Mark couldn't vote for himself, so he naturally voted for Dick," said Eric. "Everyone else voted for Mark — so it *had* to be Mark who voted for Dick. Am I right, Mark?"

"Quite right!" said Mark, his face red with pleasure. "Well, thanks awfully for voting me leader. I'll do my best to be a decent one. Now then — let's choose the name for our club. The 'something' Six — what shall it be?"

Ideas came quickly, and were shouted out eagerly. "The Strong Six! The Striking Six! The Shocking Six! The Trusty Six! The Secret Six!"

"Not the Secret Six. Too much like the well-known Secret Seven," said Mark. "Let's have a definite name of our own."

"The Stalwart Six! The Sturdy Six!" cried Eric. "The . . ."

"Wait! What about the *Sturdy* Six?" said Mark. "Seems a good, strong sort of name to me. To be sturdy is to be trustable and straight and

"*Now — write down the name of the one you'd like best for leader.*"

dependable and strong — 'The Sturdy Six' — yes, that seems a good name to me for our club. Hands up those who like it best of all the names."

Every hand went up. Mark nodded. "Right — I hereby proclaim that we six are now formed into a club which has the name of The Sturdy Six."

Mollie grinned round in delight. "Mark's a good leader already!" she remarked. "I hereby proclaim that he is a . . ."

"Shut up, please, Mollie," said Mark. "Now about badges. We shall need to have S.S. on them, for Sturdy Six. Er — any suggestions?"

The four boys gazed hard at the two girls, and they at once responded! "All right — we know what those looks mean!" said Mollie. "You want us to make the badges for us all. Right, we will!"

"How will you make them?" asked James.

"Easy!" said Katie. "We'll get six buttons all the same size. We'll cut out bits of cloth, and

embroider S.S. on them for Sturdy Six. Then we'll sew each bit over the button, so that the S.S. is on the front — and sew a little safety-pin on the back to pin the badge on to our coats. S.S. for the Sturdy Six — shan't we be proud to wear them?"

"Thanks awfully," said Mark. "Now for a password. Any suggestions?"

There were plenty! "Hen-house!" said Eric, looking round at the perches.

"New laid eggs," said Katie, and everyone chuckled.

"Sturdy!" said Mark.

"Cluck-cluck!" said Mollie. That made everyone laugh so much that it was chosen at once for the password.

"Whatever will people think when they hear us murmuring 'cluck-cluck' to each other when we meet?" said Katie.

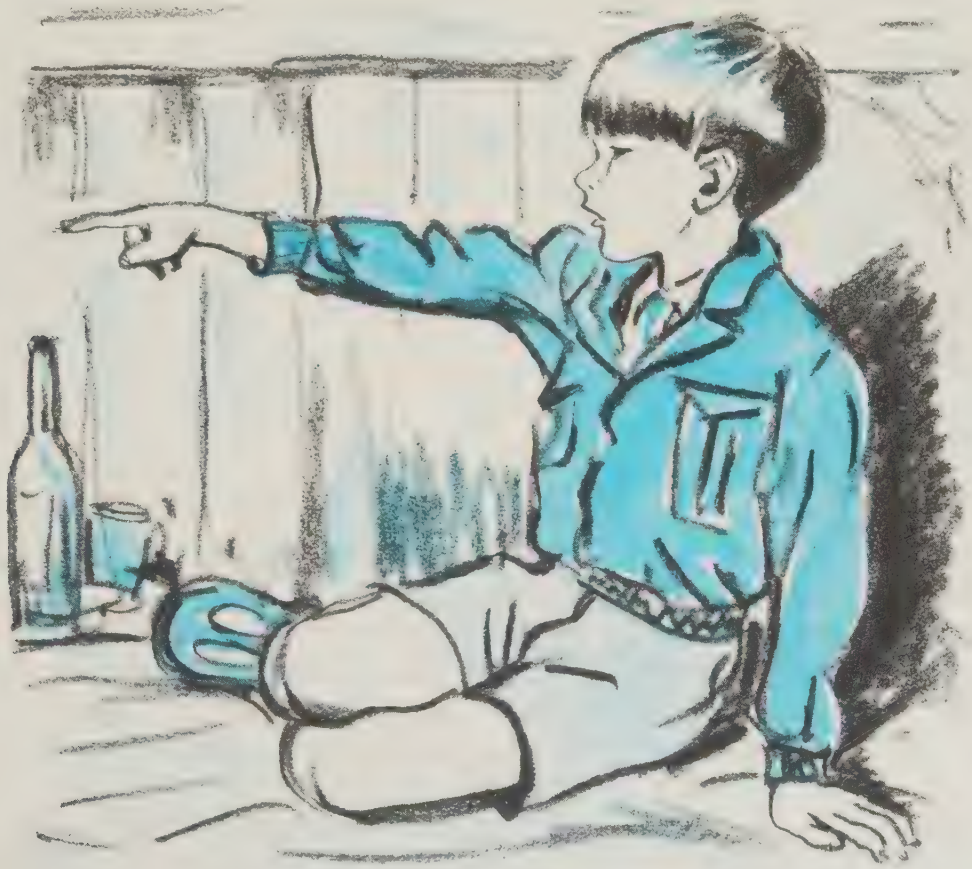
"Well, it's really only a password to gain entrance to our meeting-place," said Mark. "In future, no one can enter any of our meetings, wherever they are, unless he or she first says the password. So don't forget it, please."

"Shall we discuss a secret signal now?" asked Dick, but Mark was looking at his watch. He shook his head.

"Sorry — the meeting's over. Meet here on Friday evening at half past five again. We'll then discuss what our aim should be, what things we can do together, and a secret signal if we think it's necessary. Buck up — it's time to go if we're going to get any homework done this evening!"

They all trooped out of the hen-house, feeling thrilled and pleased. "I'm glad you're leader, Mark," said Eric. "You can direct everything well, that's quite plain. Well — the Sturdy Six are now a club — and I'm jolly glad to belong to it!"

(Later on in this book you will find out what the club did at their second meeting, so that if any of you have formed a club meanwhile, in the way that the Six did, you too will know what to do next!)



"The Stalwart Six! The Sturdy Six!" cried Eric.

LAMBS AND LAMBS' TAILS

"I do like walking," said Mary, one day in early Spring.
"So do I," said Peter, "especially at this time of year."
"There is something exciting to see at every season of the year," said their Uncle Nat.
"Shall we go for some walks together whenever we can, and look out for the many wonderful things Nature has to show us?" "Oh, yes!" said both children together. "Let's start to-day, Uncle Nat." In this book you will find six of the many rambles they had together.

It was a bright day in the beginning of March when Uncle Nat and the children set out on their first walk. Peter was very excited and very talkative.

"I say, there are baby lambs in the big field by the farm," said Peter. "I've seen them — tiny little things, all legs and wriggling tails."

"Yes, and there are lambs' tails all over the hedges," said Uncle Nat.

The children stared at him. Mary pictured little wriggling tails all over the hawthorn hedge. She laughed. "You do say funny things, Uncle Nat. Are you talking about Little Bo-peep's Sheep who left their tails behind them?"

"No, I'm talking about the hazel catkins," said Uncle Nat. "Haven't you ever heard them called lambs' tails before? I think it is such a good name for the long dangling catkin tails. Shall we go and see the little skipping lambs this morning and hunt for some lambs' tails to bring home?"

They set off to the big field. There were about six or seven little lambs there, with black faces, long skippetty legs, and wriggling tails.

"And here are some hazel catkins," said Mary, picking a twig with some green lambs' tails dangling down. "I like them, Uncle Nat. They will look lovely in a vase. Let's pick some more."

They had a pleasant time watching the lambs and picking the lambs' tails. Then they went home and stood the hazel twigs in water. In a day or two the catkins had lengthened out and were turning yellow. Every time Mary touched them they sent out clouds of yellow powder.

"What is the yellow powder for, Uncle Nat?" she asked. "Is it pollen? There are no bees about to take it, are there?"

"The hazel tree doesn't bother about bees," said Uncle Nat. "It uses the *wind* to blow its pollen everywhere. The pollen helps the hazel tree to make its seeds — which are the nuts we gathered in the autumn."

"But — what do the nuts grow from?" asked Peter in surprise. "There are no flowers on the hazel — unless you call the catkins flowers."

"They are flowers — the male flowers," said Uncle Nat. "But there are other flowers on the hazel too — female flowers — the ones that make the nuts. Look carefully along those little twigs you have and see if you can find them."

The children looked. At first it seemed as if there was nothing there but little brown leafbuds — but then Mary spied a bud that had a few tiny red spikes hanging out of it. "Oh, look," she said, "is that what you mean, Uncle Nat? Is this funny bud with red spikes a hazel flower too?"

"Yes," said Uncle Nat. "It is waiting for the yellow catkin pollen to fall on it — then it can begin to make nuts for the autumn. The wind blows the pollen about and some is bound to fall on the little red spikes."

"What a clever idea!" said Mary. "I never knew *that* before. I'm sure not many people know that the hazel tree has two different flowers, Uncle Nat — the long dangling catkin, and the tiny red-spiked bud."

"Well, they only need to look, and they'll see them both!" said Peter.

Miss Hannah's Windmill

IT was a horrid, windy, rainy afternoon. The three children looked gloomily out of the playroom window.

"No good going out to play," said twelve-year-old Jack.

"We've already been for a walk and it was horrid," said ten-year-old Jane.

"I want to do something exciting," said eight-year-old Lucy.

"There's nothing exciting to do," said Jane. "And don't ask us to play snakes and ladders with you, because we don't want to. Or snap, or beggar-my-neighbour. Silly baby games."

"Let's go and ask Mother to come and play with us," said Jack. So they went downstairs and found their mother. She was very busy, and Miss Hannah, who had once been her governess, was with her. She was staying for some time to help in the house.

"Mother, come and play with us," said Lucy.

"Oh, my dears, I can't possibly," said Mother. "I've about twenty letters to write. Surely you can play by yourselves?"

"Shall *I* go and do something with them?" said Miss Hannah. "I'd like to."

The three children looked at Miss Hannah doubtfully. She seemed rather old to them. They didn't think she would be able to do anything exciting at all.

Miss Hannah smiled at them. She had a nice smile, and though it put even more wrinkles into her face it made her look younger and very cheerful.

"Well, Miss Hannah — if it wouldn't be bothering you too much," said Mother, "I'd be very glad if you would go to the playroom with them and see if you can think of something for them to do."

"Come along then," said Miss Hannah, and went upstairs with the children. "Now," she said, "shall we make something? I'm very good at making things."

"What sort of things?" asked Jack.

"Anything! I don't mind what it is!" said Miss Hannah, surprisingly. "You just say what you want and I'll show you how to make it."

"No — *you* make something for us," said Lucy, who wasn't very good with her hands.

"Good gracious — it's much more fun to make things yourselves," said Miss Hannah. "Now quick — tell me what you want to make?"

Jack was standing by the window. He looked out and saw a child running down the street. She held a windmill in her hand — a gaily-coloured paper windmill set on a stick, that whirled round and round in the wind as she ran.

"I know — let's make windmills!" he said. "Lucy would like that — you like those windmills that blow round and round, don't you, Lucy?"

"Oh yes," said Lucy. "Miss Hannah, can you make windmills?"

"Easily," said Miss Hannah. "Now — let me see — what shall we want? We shall want nice stiff paper — crayons — and drawing-pins — and some sticks."

"I'll get the sticks," said Jack. "I know where there are some — in the garden shed. I'll pop on my Wellingtons and mac and go and get them."

"And I'll find some stiff paper," said Jane. "There's plenty in our desks. Lucy, get the crayons, and find some drawing-pins."

Soon all the things were ready on the table. "Now, we only have a little while before tea-

time," said Miss Hannah. "So you must all pay attention carefully." She gave them each a sheet of the stiff paper.

"It's just about the right size," she said. "About twelve inches square. Now, is everybody ready? Fold your paper into sixteen squares."

"Oh dear — how?" asked Lucy.

"Baby!" said Jack. "Like this. First you fold your paper into half. Then you fold it in half again. See?"

"Yes," said Lucy, and copied Jack. Jane was doing the same.

"Now fold it in half, and then in half again the *other* way round," said Jack. "That's right. Now open the paper and you'll have sixteen squares. *(See Fig. 1.)* What next, Miss Hannah?"

"Now make a diagonal fold across from corner to corner," said Miss Hannah. "And another one from the other corners. Good! Now — open the paper again." *(See Fig. 2.)*

They all opened their paper squares and looked at Miss Hannah. What next?

"Fold down the top row of squares," said Miss Hannah. They all did that. "Now fold over your *right* hand row of squares," she said, and they did that too.

"Now comes the only tricky bit," said Miss Hannah. "I want you to pull out the top square to a point, and flatten it — like this, look — that's the first point of our windmill."

It *was* a bit tricky pulling out the point, but you can see how it was done in Fig. 3.

"Now turn your paper round and pull out another point in the same way," said Miss Hannah, "first folding over the side squares, of course. That's right. Now do the third point — and now the fourth. Flatten all the points down well."

Jack managed easily. Jane found it easy after the first one, but Lucy made a muddle. Miss Hannah had to help her. "*This* is the way to pull out the points," she said. "Just pull them up like this — and flatten them down."

"My word — it makes a very good windmill," said Jack. "And quite simple too. I often wondered how those men who sold the windmills made them. Now I know! I suppose all we have to do now is to colour them and pin them on to the sticks with the drawing-pins."

"Quite right!" said Miss Hannah. "Make them as bright a colour as possible."

Jack and Jane used their paints and painted the windmill arms bright red, blue and yellow. Lucy coloured hers with crayons. Then they each pinned the gay windmills on to the sticks.

"Let's put on our coats and rush round the garden in the wind with our windmills," said Jane, who wanted to see if hers really worked. "There's just time. Thank you awfully, Miss Hannah."

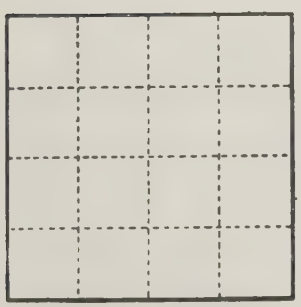


Figure 1

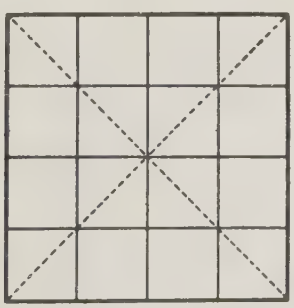


Figure 2

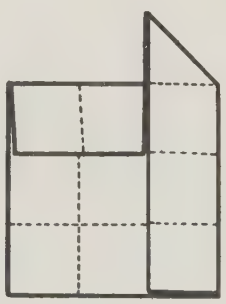
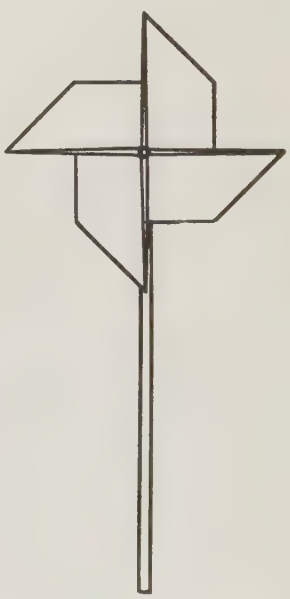


Figure 3

Figure 4



MR. GOON IS ASTOUNDED

From THE MYSTERY OF THE STRANGE BUNDLE, which is the tenth adventure of the Five Find-Outers and Dog. Fatty and the other Find-Outers have come to a house called "The Cedars" to see if they can discover something about a burglary there — and while they are at the house, Mr. Goon the village policeman also arrives, discovers the children there, and is very angry. Fatty decides to try his powers of ventriloquism on the policeman.

"Now then, you kids! What are you doing here? Clear orf!"

ALMOST before Fatty had had time to get downstairs there came the sound of Goon's angry voice.

"Now then, you kids! What are you doing here? Clear off!"

Then came the sound of Buster's barking. Fatty grinned. How many, many times had this same scene been acted — the Find-Outers snooping round — Goon finding them — ordering them off — and Buster objecting loudly! Well — Buster could certainly look after not only himself but all the children too!

Fatty wondered whether he could slip out of the front door. He could hear that Mr. Goon was round at the back.

"Interfering with the Law!" he heard, in the policeman's angry voice. "Poking your noses in! What's it to do with you, I'd like to know. Clear off!"

"Well, we live just close by," said Larry. "It's naturally interesting to us — to Daisy and me I mean. If burglars are in the district I want to get some information in case they come to rob our house too, next door but one."

"Gah!" said Goon disbelievingly. "Tommy-rot! Just an excuse for interfering. This here job's a potty little job — no mystery in it at all. Not worth your notice, see? And take that dog away before I lose my temper with him. Nasty yappy little mongrel!"

Fatty longed to be out there with the others. Calling Buster a *mongrel!* Why, the little Scottie had a pedigree a yard long, and all his grandparents had been champions. Fatty boiled with rage. He tiptoed to the front door. He didn't want Mr. Goon to catch him in the house, even though he had the perfectly good excuse to offer of rescuing the kitten.

"Where's that fat boy?" demanded Mr. Goon, suddenly realising that Fatty was absent. "Still in bed with the 'flu', I hope. Best place for him, too. Hope he gets a relapse! WILL you call this dog off?"

Larry called Buster. "Buster, come here. I can find some better ankles for you if you want some."

Mr. Goon snorted. That was one of the things he did remarkably well. "Go on out of this garden, all of you," he said. "Any more messing about here and I'll report you. Yes, and I'll go round to your parents again, too — specially yours, Master Philip Hilton!"

Pip hastily removed himself from the garden of the little house, taking Bets with him. He didn't want Goon to make any more complaints to his parents. They had a habit of taking Mr. Goon seriously! Larry and Daisy followed, Larry holding Buster by the collar. They stood outside the front gate, wondering what Fatty was going to do.

Fatty was most unfortunate. He opened the front door from inside at exactly the same moment that Mr. Goon unlocked it from the outside. Mr. Goon stared at Fatty as if a thunderbolt had hit him. His mouth fell open and he went a familiar purple colour. He swallowed hard.

"Good morning, Mr. Goon," said Fatty, smoothly. "Do come in. I'll shut the door for you."

Mr. Goon stepped in, still wordless. Then he exploded into speech.

"What are you doing here? HERE, in this house that's under police supervision. You want to get locked up, I suppose — Being Found on Enclosed Premises, and up to no good, I'll be bound! HO!"

Fatty stepped back out of range of Mr. Goon's explosions. "I heard a kitten mewing here," he said, still politely. "And being a subscriber to the R.S.P.C.A. — if you know what that means, Mr. Goon — I naturally had to come into the house to find it."

"Pah!" said Mr. Goon disbelievingly. "This here house is habsolutely hempty! I've been through it meself with a tooth-comb already!"

"This 'ere 'ouse hisn't habsolutely hempty," said Fatty. "Dear me, I seem to be getting muddled. Hark, Mr. Goon — can't you hear the kitten mewing now?"

"Miaow!" said the kitten, and obligingly crept out from under the hall-stand. It went to Fatty and rubbed affectionately against his legs. Then it looked at Mr. Goon, hissed at him and spat.

"Most intelligent behaviour," observed Fatty. "I hope you believe in the kitten now, Mr. Goon."

Mr. Goon did. He had to. "Take it away and take yourself off too," he said to Fatty. "I've work to do here. And Keep Out of This, see?"

"You'll be careful of the dog here, won't you, Mr. Goon," said Fatty. "I'm not quite sure where it is — you may possibly hear it growling somewhere, and trace it by that."

"There's no dog here," said Mr. Goon, stalking past Fatty. "A kitten I might have missed, being so small-like, but not a dog. What do you take me for?"

"It would be better not to tell you," murmured Fatty. "Not here, anyway."

He was just behind the policeman, and it was as well for Mr. Goon that he couldn't see the innocent expression on Fatty's face — a look that all his form-masters knew only too well.

A blood-curdling growl suddenly came from somewhere in the house. Mr. Goon stopped as if he had been shot. "What's that?" he said.

"Sounded like the dog," said Fatty. "What a horrible animal it must be. I think I'll go, Mr. Goon, and leave you to tackle him."

Another growl came from somewhere, and the policeman took two hurried steps backwards, treading heavily on Fatty's foot.

"Ouch!" said Fatty. "Look out where you're going if you want to walk backwards, Mr. Goon! Well — good-bye — I'll leave you now."

"You come and help me find that dog," said Mr. Goon, changing his mind completely about wanting Fatty to clear off. "It might want two of us to get him. Funny I didn't see him or hear him when I was here before this morning."

Fatty grinned behind Mr. Goon's broad back. He debated whether to produce another animal-noise. This ventriloquism was Most Useful!

"All right, Mr. Goon," he said. "If you think it's my duty to stay and help you, I will. I'm

always around when Duty Calls, you know."

Mr. Goon was very thankful. He began to tiptoe forward into the little dining-room. Fatty followed a few paces behind. He suddenly gave a shout that made Mr. Goon nearly fall over backwards.

"Look, look — what's that — over there! LOOK OUT!"

Mr. Goon was so anxious to get out as well as to look out that he almost fell over Fatty, as he tried to rush out of the room. Fatty clutched him as he went.

"It's all right! It's all right! I just caught sight of you in that mirror over there, Mr. Goon, and it was such a dreadful sight I thought it must be someone lying in wait for us. Gosh, thank goodness it was only your reflection!"

Mr. Goon was very angry and very relieved. He glared at Fatty. "Any more of this funny business," he began, and then stopped suddenly.

From somewhere behind came the sound of heavy grunting. Mr. Goon swung round at once. "Did you hear that?" he asked Fatty, breathlessly. "That grunting noise. What was it? It sounded out there in the hall."

Fatty opened the front door at exactly the same moment.

"Yes, it did," said Fatty, clutching at Mr. Goon's arm and making him jump again. "You go first, Mr. Goon. I'm scared."

So was Mr. Goon. He tiptoed into the hall and promptly fell over the kitten which made a dart at him as soon as he appeared. He retreated into the dining-room again, bumping into Fatty. The grunting noise was heard once more, this time sounding farther off.

"It's a pig!" said Mr. Goon, hardly able to believe his ears. "Sounded upstairs that time. Did you think it was a pig, Master Frederick?"

The more frightened and puzzled Mr. Goon became, the more polite he was. At this rate, thought Fatty, he'll soon be bowing to me every time he speaks! He badly wanted to laugh, but he firmly thrust down the ever-mounting guffaw that wanted to rise up and explode.

"What sort of a fellow was it who lived here, Mr. Goon?" asked Fatty innocently. "Was he fond of animals? He seems to have kept kittens, and dogs, and pigs, anyway."

"How was it I didn't see the pig when I was here this morning," marvelled Mr. Goon. "I turned everything over and looked everywhere for clues. And yet I didn't see the dog or the pig. Shall we go upstairs to find the pig?"

"Yes. But be careful the dog doesn't rush out at you," said Fatty. "You go first, Mr. Goon."

Mr. Goon didn't want to go first. He pushed Fatty in front of him, and then immediately wished he hadn't because a deep and ferocious growl came from somewhere behind him. Fatty was certainly practising his new talent well!

And then a new sound came to worry poor Mr. Goon. A voice came from somewhere, a groaning voice that said:

"I never did it, I never! Oooooh! I never did it! Where's my auntie?"

Goon listened, petrified. He began to feel as if he was in a nightmare. He whispered to Fatty.

Goon stumbled to the telephone and dialled a number.

"There's a man here somewhere! This beats all! We'd better get help. I'm not going to snoop round here with dogs, and pigs, and a man groaning. What's been happening since I was here this morning?"

"Look, you stay here, Mr. Goon, and I'll go and get help," said Fatty, and moved firmly into the hall. But Mr. Goon clutched at him.

"No, don't leave me here alone. Can't *you* stay while I get help?"

"Remember your duty, Mr. Goon," said Fatty, solemnly. "There is Something Queer here, and it's your duty to examine it. But it's not *my* duty. I'll go and get help. Good-bye!"

Goon held on to him tightly, and then the Voice began again. "I never did it, I never! Oooooh! I never did it! Where's my auntie?"

Goon began to shake. "What's he mean, talking about his auntie?" he whispered. "Come on, let's go! This is a mad-house, this is."

"Mr. Goon — why not telephone for help!" said Fatty, suddenly catching sight of the telephone in the hall. "You'd get someone here in a trice then."

Mr. Goon was so relieved at this bright idea of Fatty's that he almost embraced him. He stumbled to the telephone and dialled a number.

Fatty heard him telephoning to another constable. He tiptoed silently out of the front door, grinning as he heard Goon's agonised voice.

"Send someone up here at once. There's a fierce dog in the house — and a pig — yes, I said a pig — P-I-G. Yes, PIG, you ass. And a groaning man who wants his auntie. AUNTIE! Yes, I did say Auntie. Are you deaf, or something? Well, how do *I* know why he wants his Auntie? No, I'm not daft, but I soon shall be if you don't send someone to this address at once. Yes, I do want help — YES, there IS a dog here — and a pig — and an Auntie — no, not an Auntie, but a man who wants one. Oh, and there's a kitten. I forgot to mention that."

There was a pause as Goon listened to a few remarks from the other end of the telephone. He spluttered into it again.

"Any more sauce from you, Kenton, and I'll report you. I'm NOT having a joke with you. You come up here at once. AT ONCE, do you hear?"

Fatty heard all this, and felt that he really must go somewhere and laugh. He tiptoed round to the back of the house where there was a shed he could go into and laugh in peace. He saw the broken casement window, hanging open, as he passed. He thrust his head inside, and sent a terrible growl into the house.

Mr. Goon heard it. He looked round, and found that Fatty had gone. He was alone — alone in the house with a host of terrifying things. It was too much for Goon. He fled at top speed out of the front door, and didn't stop running till he came to the bottom of the road.

Fatty heard him go. And then he laughed. How he laughed! It really was the best laugh Fatty had ever had in all his life!

THE RUBADUB MYSTERY

The following extract (there is another later in the book) comes from one of the six "Barney" Mystery books, THE RUBADUB MYSTERY, published by Collins, in which appear Barney the Circus Boy and his wicked little monkey, Miranda; Diana and Roger, and their cheeky, irresponsible cousin Snubby — and, of course, Loony, Snubby's completely crazy spaniel. In this seaside story the three cousins and Loony the spaniel, and also Barney and his monkey, are all staying at Rub-a-Dub Inn, with Miss Pepper, a friend of the family. The children have just gone to a show on the pier . . . and afterwards some of the Mystery begins to creep in!

IRIS stepped forward to make an announcement.

"Now comes the end of our programme and perhaps the best part," she said with her engaging smile. "The Children's Competition. As usual we have two prizes of five shillings, one for the cleverest boy, and one for the cleverest girl."

A jingling noise from the Funny Man proclaimed that the money was ready and waiting. "Can I go in for it, please, Miss?" said the Funny Man pathetically. "I'm not nearly as rich as all these children here. I can sing 'Three Blind Mice' well, I can, really."

Iris went on with her little speech. "We don't mind what you do — sing, dance, recite, play our piano, tell us a funny story — or even do a bit of conjuring that will put Mr. Marvel into the shade. Now come along — who'll begin?"

Two small girls and a boy pushed their way eagerly to the stage. Another girl followed, and two more boys. Roger gave Snubby a nudge. "Go on! Do your stuff too, Snubby."

But Snubby was unaccountably overcome with nerves, and he glowered at Roger. "Im' not going to make a fool of myself, so shut up."

The children proved very ordinary indeed. Two of the girls played the piano, thumping very loudly. One boy sang a comic song, of which nobody could hear a single word.

Another small girl did a competent little step dance, but was obviously so conceited that nobody clapped very much except her fond and admiring Mamma, who must nearly have worn the skin off her hands.

Then a boy about Snubby's age gave a recitation at such a speed that nobody could follow it at all. He then retired from the platform, also at top speed, quite overcome by his effort.

The third boy refused to perform at all. He stoop up on the platform the picture of misery.

"I've forgot me words," he kept saying. "I've forgot me words. Mum, what's me words?"

Mum had apparently forgotten them, too, so the small boy left the platform in tears.

"Now now, children!" said Iris reprovingly. "I'm *sure* there's somebody else who can try for the five shillings. We do badly want another boy."

"Let *me* try, Miss, do let *me* try," urged the Funny Man, putting on a little-boy voice. "I can do things lovely! Oh yes, I can! I'm top of my form, I am, for singing and whistling." He pursed up his mouth to whistle, but hard as he blew, no sound came. So he produced a big whistle from his pocket and blew on that, making Iris jump violently. Every one laughed, he was so idiotic.

"One more boy!" urged Iris. "Just one. Then we shall have had three girls performing and three boys."

The Funny Man came to stand beside Iris. He looked straight at Snubby. Then he pointed at him. "Look, Iris," he said, "there's the World's Wonder down there. See him? Chap with red hair, turned-up nose and freckles! Finest banjo player the world has ever seen. Pays a hundred pounds for each of his banjos. Whew!"

Snubby solemnly tuned up the strings of his banjo.

Every one craned necks to look at Snubby. He went scarlet to the roots of his red hair. "Come on, son!" cried the Funny Man. "Shy as a girl, are you? Not you! Come on up and play us your banjo. Tell us your tune and the pianist will accompany you."

"Go on, Snubby," said Roger, "You've got to, now. Those other boys were frightful."

Snubby went up to the platform, pretending to carry an imaginary banjo, half annoyed, half pleased at the Funny Man's patter. He stood facing the audience. The Funny Man solemnly placed a chair beside him. "To put your leg up on," he informed him. "That's a heavy banjo you have there. Rest it on your leg, mate. Now — what's your tune?"

Snubby suddenly entered into the fun of it. He laughed. "I'll play you 'What's the time when it's twelve o'clock'," he announced, and put his leg up on the chair. The song he had chosen was very popular just then, a silly jigging tune that was admirable for the banjo. The pianist nodded. He knew the tune well.

"I must just tune up," said Snubby, and he solemnly tuned up the strings of his imaginary banjo, imitating twanging noises as if he really were screwing the wires to their correct pitch. People began to laugh.

"Right. Ready?" said Snubby to the pianist. "Not too loud, please. Tune all through, the chorus twice."

He brought his hand down on imaginary strings and made a startling twanging noise. Then off he went, twanging away with his right hand, making a most remarkable banjo-like noise that followed the tune absolutely correctly. Snubby could make his noises very loudly, and the pianist did not drown him at all, but followed him perfectly. They made an excellent pair.

"Twang-a-twang-twang-twang, twang-twang-twang," went Snubby, and ended off with what sounded like a marvellous chord. He put down the leg that was supposed to be holding up the imaginary banjo and bowed solemnly.

He got more applause than any other member of the show had been given, even more than Mr. Marvel! He looked such an odd, cheeky, amusing fellow with his red hair and wide grin. Every one yelled for more.

"One more — can you manage it?" asked the Funny Man, delighted. "Any other instrument?"

"I've happened to bring my zither," said Snubby solemnly, and put down his imaginary banjo and took up his imaginary zither. "I'll have to sit down for this, please."

He sat down, and once more he and the pianist gave an extraordinary performance together. Snubby reproduced the harp-like sounds of a zither perfectly, and instead of a jiggy song, he chose a romantic tune, "If I could only give you the moon." He didn't sing it, of course, but made the sound of a zither playing the tune. It was most remarkable. Every one listened intently, Miss Pepper feeling more surprised than she had ever felt in her life.

Fancy *Snubby*, the crazy idiotic *Snubby* holding a big audience like this with just a little make-believe! Roger and Diana felt very proud to think they had such a clever cousin!

The tune ended. The Funny Man bowed to Snubby. "Quite a maestro!" he said, and Snubby wondered whether he was being rude or complimentary. He had never heard the word before, and didn't know that it meant first-class. But the Funny Man was delighted with him. He turned to the audience. "And now to give out the prizes," he said. "We award the girl's prize to little Lorna Jones for her step dancing."

There was very slight applause. Certainly Lorna had been good, but nobody had liked the little show-off.

"The boy's prize goes — of course — to our young friend here, for . . ."

Snubby walked home in a whirl of excitement.

But the rest of his words were drowned in claps and stamps and cheers. Evidently everyone approved of that award. Snubby, redder than ever, bowed and took the five shillings. What an evening! Whoever would have thought that his crazy habit of strumming imaginary musical instruments would have brought Snubby such tumultuous applause?

Snubby walked home in a whirl of excitement. "Now don't let all this go to your head," said Roger, afraid that Snubby might become quite unbearable. "After all, you can't *really* play the banjo or the zither — and you can only pick out 'chop-sticks' on the piano. You're no musician, really."

"And for goodness' sake don't play banjos and things all over the hotel," begged Diana. "They won't like it a bit if you do."

Snubby took not the slightest notice. "I've been wondering if I could imitate an organ," he said. "Or a drum."

"*No*, Snubby," said Miss Pepper firmly. "Oh dear, here comes Miss Twitt. Hurry!"

But Miss Twitt was determined to pile praises on Snubby. "The little wonder!" she said, as she hurried up to them. "What a little marvel! The clever little boy. He's a born player, isn't he, Miss Pepper?"

"Well — I wouldn't say *that*," said Miss Pepper. "He can't play a note, actually."

"Fancy that! It just shows how wonderful he is to make people think he *can* play!" prattled Miss Twitt. "I *quite* thought it was a real banjo. He really *ought* to join the pierrots, oughtn't he? Every one would come to hear him!"

Miss Pepper glanced at Snubby and was horrified to see a pleased and fatuous smile on his face. He was drinking it all in!

"Snubby's little tricks are quite all right to amuse his friends at school," she said firmly. "But that's really all they are. It's silly to think them anything else, Miss Twitt."

Fortunately they had now reached the inn. "I want a drink," announced Snubby. "All that twang-a-twanging has made me thirsty. Can I have a lemonade, Miss Pepper — two if you like. Oh, I say — wait a bit, though — I'd forgotten my five shillings. Drinks all round, please. What'll you have, Miss Pepper? Miss Twitt? Orangeade? Lemonade? Or go a splash and have ginger beer?"

Diana began to giggle. Snubby really could be very funny.

Miss Pepper ordered the different drinks and then sent all three children, and a very sleepy Loony, up to bed.

"It's late," she said. "Very late. Take your orangeade with you. No, Snubby, I don't care if you have five shillings or ten shillings, you can't have more than one orangeade. No, Loony can't have one either. Water is quite good enough for him."

Snubby went off sorrowfully. He had hoped to stay downstairs until Iris, Mr. Marvel and the Funny Man came back, and also Professor James, who had still not returned. Praise from

Miss Pepper sent all three children and a very sleepy Loony up to bed.

them would be worth a hundred times more than fulsome words from Miss Twitt.

Snubby was too excited to go to sleep that night. Roger snored gently and peacefully while Snubby tossed and turned, his mind full of wonderful plans. He would practise more and more imaginary instruments to play. He would appear on platforms in great halls. He would broadcast — perhaps he wouldn't, though, because people might think he was *really* playing

Snubby went up the staircase cautiously.

a banjo or zither or guitar — they wouldn't be able to *see* that he hadn't really got one.

Well, what about television, then? That would be the thing. And what about a drum? He was sure he could make that big BOOM-BOOM noise. He began to practise it very softly. Then he couldn't resist doing a very loud BOOM!

And then a most frightening thing happened. As soon as Snubby had delivered his BOOM, another BOOM came — a terrific one, muffled and very frightening. The inn shook. Snubby sat up in bed, scared.

"Bombs!" he thought. "No — can't be. Of course — it's an explosion in the Submarine Bay. Some experiment like the one we heard the other day."

He thought for a moment. "But wait a minute — this is the middle of the night — about half-past two, I should think. They wouldn't experiment then, and wake everyone up."

The noise hadn't, however, awakened Roger, who was in his deepest sleep. It hadn't awakened Diana either. Miss Pepper had heard it, and had sat up, listening. But as there was no more noise she had lain down again.

Snubby felt restless. He couldn't possibly lie down and go to sleep to-night. A thought flashed into his head. He would go up that little stairway that led to the skylight, open it, and peer out. He *might* be able to see something through that cleft in the cliff — something down in the Submarine Bay!

He slipped out of bed and went to the door. He opened it and went out on to the dark landing. Nobody seemed to be stirring. Probably they hadn't heard the noise then.

Snubby stole to the little door that shut off the steep staircase. He opened it quietly. Yes — there was the staircase — he could feel it with his foot though he couldn't see it. He went up cautiously. It was a clear night and Snubby could see stars shining through the little square of glass set in the middle of the trap-door that opened on to the roof.

He opened it, pushing it back carefully, so as not to make a sound. He looked out.

Gosh! Something *had* happened down in the Submarine Bay. Snubby could see quite clearly through the cleft in the cliff. Far away, on the other side of it, was the bay, and something was burning there, on the water. Searchlights were playing here and there. Snubby held his breath. Something had happened. Some awful accident, perhaps. He wished he could see more.

"Perhaps if I climb right out of the trap-door

I can find a bit higher place to see from," he thought. "It would be quite easy."

He climbed to the topmost stair and found it simple to get out on the roof, which, just there, was flat. Snubby looked round. There was a rise in the roof just to the right of him, where a set of chimneys rose up together. He could sit on the little rise, beside a chimney.

He made his way cautiously across to the rise in the roof, and crawled up it on hands and knees. Now he was by a chimney. But the wind swept him that side, so he crawled round in between two chimneys where he was well protected. One chimney was warm — good!

But to his disappointment he couldn't see much more of the bay than he had seen before, although he was now a little higher. Searchlights were still criss-crossing, and the flames of whatever was burning were still as high. Perhaps a submarine had exploded and was on fire?

Snubby cuddled up to the warm chimney, feeling very daring to be out on the roof in the middle of the night. He suddenly sniffed the air.

He could smell something. What was it? Cigarette smoke! Couldn't be! No one else was up on the roof in the middle of the night — smoking a cigarette too!

He craned his neck round the chimney, and saw, in the distance, a tiny glow, the red, burning end of somebody's cigarette. Someone else had heard the explosion then and had come to see what could be seen.

He saw the burning end of someone's cigarette.

He soon saw that the glowing end was just where the trap-door opened on to the roof. Somebody must be standing on the stairs there, looking out and smoking. Snubby was just about to give a low call to tell them that he, too, was there, and had heard everything, when he stopped himself.

No. He'd get into a frightful row for being out on the roof at night. If Miss Pepper heard of it she would be furious. There wouldn't be any second helpings for the rest of the holidays! Silence was best. But who *was* it there? Snubby screwed up his eyes, but he could only make out a blob of a head with the glowing end of the cigarette in front.

After a while the smoker finished his cigarette and threw it down the roof. Snubby heard the soft creak of the stairs. Somebody was going down them — but that somebody had closed the trap-door first! Snubby's heart missed a beat or two. He could imagine himself sitting out on the roof all night — falling asleep — rolling down the roof — oh, how simply horrible!

He crept across to the trap-door. As he got there, a light sprang up in the window of a room some distance away. Snubby stopped. Who was in there? Probably, whoever it was, was the smoker of a few minutes before — he must have returned to his room and switched on his light. Snubby decided to see who it was.

He crawled to another position, and found that he could look right across the roof into the lighted room. The curtains were drawn across, but there was a space left in the middle.

"Gosh! It's old Professor James!" said Snubby. "What a good thing I didn't let him know I was up here. He'd have told Mrs. Glump and Miss Pepper and got me into an awful row!"

He tried the trap-door with a trembling hand. Had the Professor slipped the catch into place, so that it could not be opened?

With an enormous sigh of relief Snubby found that he *could* open it. Thank goodness! He swung it back, and then clambered on to the narrow wooden stairway. He closed the trap-door quietly and then climbed down the stairs. He opened the door at the bottom, went on to the landing and back to again his room. Roger was still fast asleep.

Just as he was about to shut his door he saw a line of light under a door nearby. It was Mr. Marvel's door. So *he* had heard the explosion too. Snubby debated whether to go in and have a chat about it — surely Mr. Marvel would welcome him now that he had given such a fine performance in the show!

He decided against it, however. Mr. Marvel wasn't quite the person to enjoy a midnight chat. He might start to do a bit more unpleasant magic on Snubby!

In the morning the whole inn was agog with the news of the explosion in the night. So were the papers.

In the morning the whole inn was agog with news.

"GREAT EXPLOSION IN HUSH-HUSH BAY," said the headlines. "WAS IT SABOTAGE? ARE OUR SECRETS SAFE? INHABITANTS OF SURROUNDING TOWNS ALMOST HURLED FROM THEIR BEDS."

"What a lie!" said Snubby. "The bed just shook, that's all. And you didn't even wake, Roger. I did!"

"Did you?" said Roger. "Was it really a big explosion?"

"Terrific," said Snubby. "Tremendous. Louder than thunder. I got out of bed and went up that stairway to look out of the trapdoor — and I saw something burning like anything. And searchlights going like mad over the bay."

"Sh! Miss Pepper will hear you," said Diana. "She'd be furious if she thought you went wandering about at night — especially up to the roof."

"She didn't hear," said Snubby. He glanced round. Old Professor James was nearby reading a newspaper. He was deaf so he wouldn't have heard either. Mr. Marvel and the Funny Man were also near — they would have heard, but probably they didn't know about the staircase anyway.

"I did something else too," said Snubby, lowering his voice. "I got out on the roof and sat beside a jolly warm chimney. Somebody else came up the staircase and looked out too. The old Professor, I think. Fancy *him* hearing the explosion and not you, Roger!"

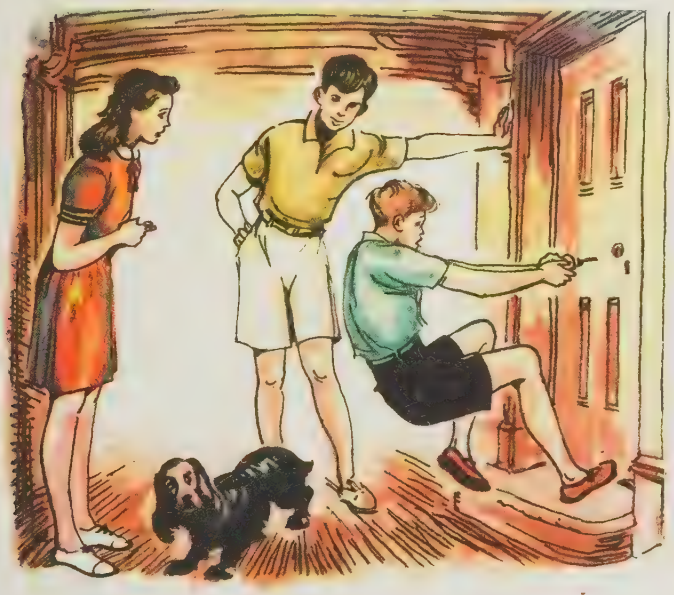
"I expect the vibration woke him, not the noise," said Diana. "I say — it's pretty serious, isn't it? One of our newest submarines blown up to the surface — and then burnt to nothing! I do wish you'd woken me up, Snubby!"

"You'd have hated seeing it," said Snubby. "Is it sabotage, do you think? I mean — would it be possible for any one to get into the bay and do a thing like that to damage us? I should have thought things were much too strict and closely guarded."

"It was probably an accident," said Roger. "You can't have successful experiments without accidents. Look at the things that happen in the lab, at school!"

"Oh well — we *plan* some of those," said Snubby. "A bit of well-planned trickery! All the same — I'd like to know if it *was* an accident. I don't want to think of people somewhere around planning to blow up more submarines — especially while we're staying here."

"Why? Are you afraid of being mixed up in another mystery?" asked Roger with a grin.



All that happened was that the handle came off.

"*Afraid!*" said Snubby with scorn. "I *like* mysteries. I dote on them. But this isn't a mystery, it seems to me. I bet it's an accident."

Whether it was or not they didn't learn from any of the papers that morning or evening. The Press seemed to shut down on the incident, which annoyed the children very much.

That afternoon was wet. The rain poured down and the children looked gloomy.

"It's a glumpish afternoon," said Snubby. "What shall we do? Shall I practise my banjo?"

"Not unless you go up on the roof or somewhere far away," said Roger. Snubby had produced his imaginary banjo, zither, guitar and harp at different times that day, and Roger and Diana were getting a little tired of the remarkable twanging, zizzing, buzzing sounds produced by Snubby.

"Let's go up that little stairway and see if the poor old submarine is still burning," said Snubby. "I promise I won't take any musical instruments with me!"

They ran upstairs to their landing and went to the little door that enclosed the staircase. Snubby turned the handle. But the door wouldn't open!

"What's the matter with it? Is it stuck?" he said, and pulled violently. All that happened was that the handle came completely off in his hand and he sat down heavily on a startled Loony.

"Ass! You *would* do that!" said Roger.

"Things always come off in my hand," complained Snubby. "Now what shall we do?"

"You'll have to go and own up to Mrs. Glump," said Diana. "Go on, Snubby. If you were brave enough to get out and sit on the roof last night, surely you're brave enough to confess to Mrs. Glump."

So Snubby had to go and find Mrs. Glump. She was in a peculiar little den, adding up rows and rows of figures, and didn't look at all pleased to see Snubby. He explained what had happened.

"But why did you pull at the handle so violently?" asked Mrs. Glump, resting her face on her four or five chins, and looking most majestic. Snubby wished he had a few chins he could look majestic with too. He felt very small beside Mrs. Glump, and she made him feel like a naughty little boy.

"Well, I pulled hard because the door stuck," said Snubby. "It's locked, I think."

"Locked! But the key would be in the lock anyway," said Mrs. Glump.

"There wasn't a key. I looked," said Snubby. "I'm sure it's locked, Mrs. Glump. I thought *you* must have locked it. I'm sorry about the handle. I've still got one and sixpence left out of the five shillings I won at the pierrot show yesterday. Would one and six pay for a new handle?"

"I expect so," said Mrs. Glump. "But I'm sure Dummy has an old one he could fix on

quickly. Go and ask him. And I hear I must congratulate you on winning the prize yesterday. Let me see — you played the banjo, didn't you?"

"Not a real one. My imaginary one. Paid a hundred pounds for it!" said Snubby with a grin, and immediately began to play a jigging, strident tune, his voice twang-twanging exactly like a banjo.

Mrs. Glump began to laugh. She had a very curious laugh. It seemed to begin somewhere deep down and then rumbled all the way past her magnificent chins, and came out as a very hearty affair indeed.

Snubby stopped, bowed and grinned. "You're a caution," said Mrs. Glump. "Get on with you! Go and find Dummy about the handle. And don't shut my door too violently in case the whole *door* comes off in your hand."

Snubby went out, pleasantly surprised. She wasn't really glumpish at all! He made his way to the kitchen to find Dummy, who was polishing some horse-brasses one by one and making a very good job of it.

"Hallo, Dummy. Can I help you? I collect horse-brasses too," said the cheerful Snubby. "I say, did you hear about me winning the five bob at the show last night?"

Dummy listened and nodded. "You," he said. "You win. Good boy."

"My word, you *are* a chatterbox to-day," said Snubby, rubbing vigorously at a brass.

"What you do?" asked Dummy earnestly.

"This," said Snubby, and played his imaginary banjo again. To his enormous surprise, Dummy also picked up an imaginary banjo and began to twang it, making a most peculiar noise as he did so, almost as good as Snubby's!

"Here — what's all this?" said a voice, and the face of the young waiter poked round the door. "Some band performing here?"

Dummy fled at once, out into the back-yard. He sat down, blinking his eyes, confused. Years and years ago he had had a real banjo and he could play it. But when he had fallen from the rope, during a wire-walking act in the circus he

Dummy stared at Snubby and then leaned forward.

was in he had hurt his head — and after that Dummy was different. Poor Dummy!

He sat till his mind cleared a little. He began to smile. Yes — he remembered his old banjo — and the tunes he played. He twanged imaginary strings again.

Snubby came into the yard to find him. "Oh, there you are, Dummy. I say, I forgot to tell you what I wanted you for. Have you got a spare door-handle? I've somehow pulled off the handle of the door that shuts in that little stairway leading to the roof."

"Roof," said Dummy. He stared at Snubby and then suddenly leaned forward. He whispered loudly in his ear. "Mind bad men up there! Bad men!"

Snubby drew back, startled. Dummy smiled and nodded at him. Then his face grew solemn again. "Bad, bad, bad," he whispered again. "Dummy see. Dummy watch. Dummy follow. Bad!"

Snubby looked at Dummy doubtfully. Poor old fellow — what peculiar imaginings had he got now? He couldn't imagine Dummy watching people and stalking them! Snubby decided to humour him.

"Snubby see. Snubby watch. Snubby follow,"

he said, equally solemnly. "Gosh, we sound like Red Indians or something! Dummy, where's an old door-handle? Let's find one and go in. I'm not too keen on sitting out here in the rain — twang-a-twang-twang-twang, zizz-a-zizz-ziz-ziz. Ker-plonk! There — I knew a string would bust if I played out in the rain. See that?"

He held out his imaginary banjo, and Dummy laughed delightedly. It was the first time Snubby had heard him laugh. It was a ripple, just like a very young child's. Snubby patted Dummy on the back.

"That's right. Laugh your troubles away! Have you such a thing as a door-handle, for the third time of asking?"

Mr. Marvel was standing outside his door.

Dummy had. He produced one from a shed and went upstairs. He was clever with his fingers and had soon fixed it. He gave it a pull.

"Locked," said Snubby. "And the key's gone. Who took it? And why? I tell you, Dummy, there were mysterious goings-on up here last night!"

"Indeed? And what were they?" said a voice.

Snubby jumped and turned round. Mr. Marvel the conjurer was standing outside his door. Snubby thought furiously. No — he wasn't going to give anything away and get himself into trouble.

"Oh, nothing," he said airily. "I was just putting the wind up old Dummy. I say, sir — that was a wizard act you put on last night. How did you do all that magic?"

"That's *my* secret," said Mr. Marvel. "Did you hear the explosion last night?"

"Yes. I jolly well did," said Snubby. "Did you?"

"No, I didn't," said Mr. Marvel, which surprised Snubby very much. Hadn't he seen a line of light under Mr. Marvell's door when he, Snubby, had come down from the roof to go to bed again?

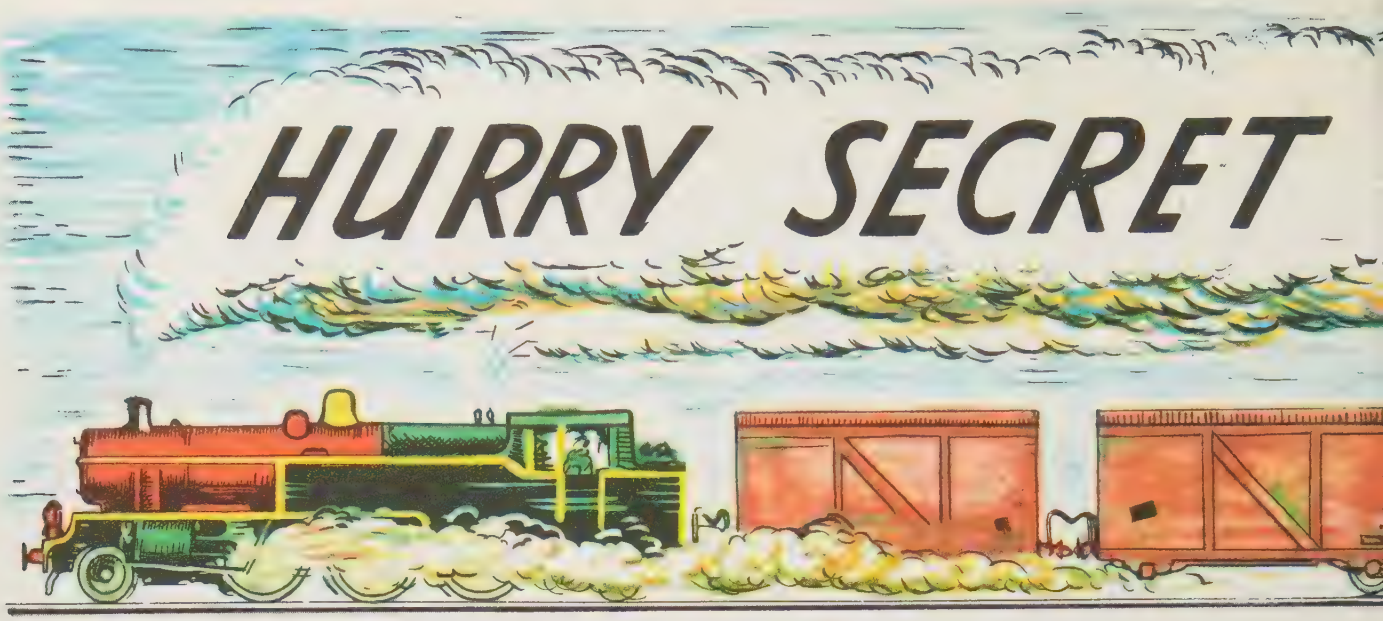
"I saw a light under your door, though," blurted out Snubby, and could have kicked himself for saying so.

"Indeed? And what were *you* doing out on the landing at that time of night?" said Mr. Marvel at once.

"Just peeped out to see if any one was awake after the explosion," said Snubby. "I say, sir — you *were* clever at the show last night!"

But Mr. Marvel was gone. Snubby was left staring at a closing door. He made a face at it. All right — *be* snorty, Mr. Marvel! You *were* awake last night! Snubby shook a furious fist, marched into his own room, and slammed the door!

(Just in case you want to know — Snubby and Barney solve the strange mystery of Submarine Bay — but only after a great deal of excitement, and many mysterious goings-on!)



The Secret Seven, as most of you will know from the books about them, are seven children who have formed a Club of their own. Here is a story about them, and their golden spaniel, Scamper.

THE Secret Seven had been out together for a picnic. Scamper was with them, his tail wagging happily. He loved being alone with Peter and Janet — but it was even better to be with the whole of the Seven! There was always somebody fussing about him then, patting him, or talking to him.

"Well, I must say the baskets weigh a lot lighter coming *home* from a picnic than *going* to one!" said Janet, swinging hers to and fro. "Oooh, sorry, Colin — I didn't know you were just behind me."

"You'd better give that basket to Scamper to carry," said Colin. "That's three times you've banged me with it."

"Shall we go home through the fields or through the town?" said Peter.

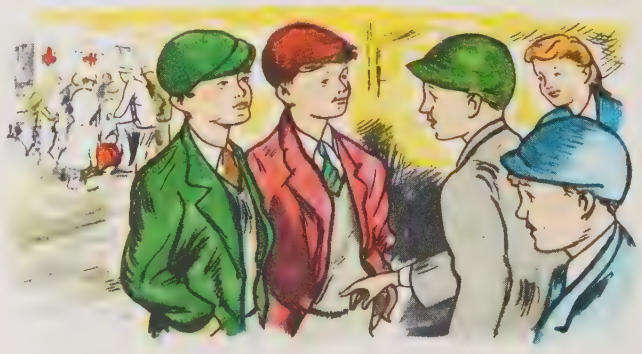
"Through the town!" said everyone. They were all thinking the same thing — what about a call at the ice-cream shop?

So they went back through the town. It was market-day and the streets were full. People rushed about here and there, carrying parcels, calling to one another, and the cars had to go very slowly indeed because there were so many people walking in the road.

A man came down the street, cycling quickly. He rang his bell as if he were in a great hurry, and people tried to get out of the way. Peter just skipped to one side in time as the man cycled past. He turned to stare after him indignantly. "He almost knocked me over," began Peter, and then stopped. Even as he spoke, something had happened.

CRASH! The man on the bicycle had bumped into a car and had been flung off into the road. A woman gave a loud scream and people hurried up at once.

The children ran to see what had happened. The man lay there, half-dazed, his head badly



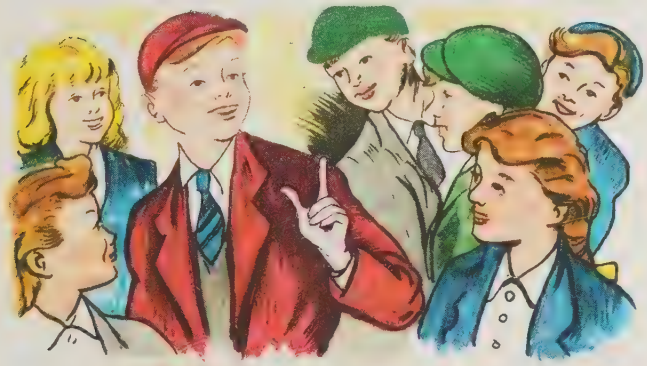
"Who was the man? Do you know?"

SEVEN, HURRY!

bruised, and his cheek cut. A policeman came up.

"He was going so *fast*," said a woman nearby. "He kept shouting to people to get out of the way. He was in an awful hurry and didn't seem to see that car."

The man tried to speak and the policeman bent down. He listened hard and looked puzzled.



"Is his name Gate?" asked Janet.

"He keeps saying 'Gate'," he said. "Is that his name? Does anyone know?"

More people crowded up and the policeman began to send them off. "Now, now — move away," he said. "Ah, here's a doctor. *Will* you move away, you kids? Give the poor fellow a chance."

The Secret Seven moved off with all the other children who had crowded round. "I'll never again ride *my* bicycle fast," said Barbara. "I never will, now I've seen how suddenly accidents can happen."

"Who was the man? Do you know?" asked Peter.

"I've never seen him before," said Pam.

"Well, I seem to know his face," said George, puzzled. "Yes, I know I do. But I just can't think *who* he is."

"*I* think I've seen him before, too," said Jack, frowning. "I've watched him doing something. What on earth can it be?"

"Oh, never mind," said Pam. "What does it matter? He's in safe hands now, with a policeman there and a doctor."

"I just *can't* remember," said George. "It's no good. I sort of feel he's something to do with the railway. He's not one of the porters, is he?"

"No," said Jack, who knew all the porters because he so often went to meet his father at the station. "He's not a porter — he's not the ticket-clerk either, or the station-master. All the same, I can't help thinking you're right — he *is* something to do with the railway."

"Oh, stop bothering about it," said Pam. "I want to forget the accident. It was horrid."

They walked along, swinging their baskets and bags, Peter and Colin arguing about football,

The seven children raced down the road and there stretched the railway-line.

and the three girls listening. Suddenly George interrupted.

"I know! I've remembered who that man is!" he said. "And we're right — he *is* something to do with the railway."

"Is his name Gate?" asked Janet.

"No," said George. " 'Gate' is part of his work, though. He's the man who opens and shuts the gate at the railway-crossing! You know — we've often watched him coming out of his little cottage and swinging the big gates open, one after the other — and then shutting them over the line when the train has passed."

"Oh *yes* — of course! You're right," said Jack. "It's Williams, the level-crossing man!"

"I *say* — I hope there's someone at his cottage who will open the gates for the next train!" said Peter, stopping suddenly. "That's why he was in such a tremendous hurry, I expect. He wanted to get back in time to open the gates."

"The six-fifteen is due soon," said Colin. "My father's on it!"

"Let's go back quickly and tell the policeman!" said Janet, suddenly feeling scared at the thought of a train racing along the lines and crashing into closed crossing-gates.

"No time," said Peter, looking at his watch. Then, like a good leader, he made up his mind quickly. "This may be serious," he said. "If there's no one at Williams' cottage to open the gates for the next train, there'll certainly be a smash. Even if the train doesn't rock off the lines, those big gates will be smashed to pieces. Buck up — we'll run to the cottage and find out if anyone is there."

The seven children, with Scamper racing behind, barking excitedly, ran along the road and round the corner. Down the next road and up a little hill and down again — and there, some way in front of them, stretched the railway-line.

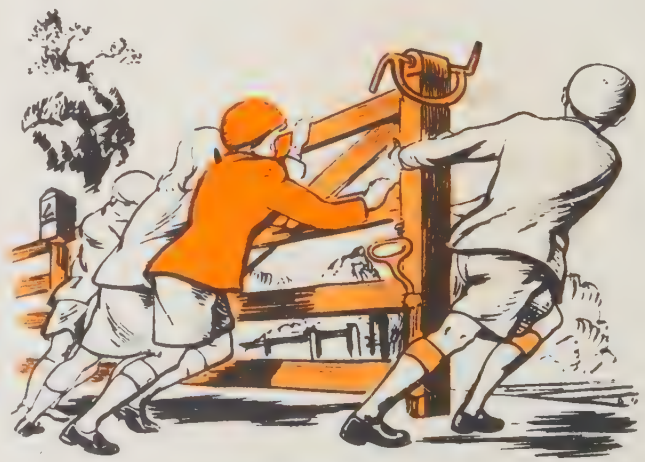
"Buck up!" panted Peter. "We're nearly there. We have still a few minutes before the train is due."

Peter reached the cottage first. It stood close beside the level-crossing, a pretty little place with a tiny garden of its own. Peter yelled as he ran up to it.

"Is there anyone at home! I say — is there anyone in?"

He banged at the door and then rang the bell beside it. Nobody answered. Nobody came. Then Colin ran to the window and looked inside.

"ANYONE IN?" he shouted at the top of his voice. He turned round. "The place is empty!" he said. "That's why Williams was biking so fast



Colin managed to open his gate first.

to get back. He hadn't left anyone to see to the gates!"

"And that's why he kept saying, 'Gate! Gate!' " said Janet. "What *are* we to do?"

"Open the gate ourselves, of course," said Peter, trying to be as calm as possible. He could see that the three girls were getting excited and alarmed. That would never do. Everyone must keep calm, everyone must help. Those gates were very, very heavy!

Colin looked round to see if anyone was near who could help them. A strong man would be most welcome! But not a soul was there except a small girl, who stared at them solemnly all the time.

"George, Janet! Come with me to the nearest gate and help me to open it!" shouted Peter. "Jack, you go to the other one with Pam and Barbara and Colin. And for goodness' sake make haste! The train's due in about a minute!"

"We must all look out for it!" shouted Colin. "It will be down on us at top speed before we know where we are!"

Soon all seven children were straining hard at the heavy gates. A great bolt had to be lifted from its hole in the ground first, and then an iron ring undone at the top of the post. It held the gate closed, and only when it was lifted back from the post would the gate open.

"I can hear the train!" yelled Janet, who had very sharp ears. "And the lines are beginning to tremble. Hurry, hurry!"

Colin, with three people to help him, managed to open his gate first and swing it slowly across the line and back, so that the way was clear. But Peter's bolt was stiff and took a good deal of easing up.

"The train's coming!" screamed Pam. "The train's coming! Get away, Peter, get away!"

Yes — the train was certainly coming. It whistled as it came roaring along, and when Peter looked up he could see it tearing down the line towards them.

With a last heave, he pulled the bolt out of its hole. Then, with all the others now helping, he swung the gate back as quickly as he could, only just in time. Pam screamed again as the engine raced past her, making quite a wind. A surprised fireman looked out of the engine-cab at the children on the line beside him. Then the long row of swaying carriages came rumbling past, making a truly enormous noise.

In a few moments the train was gone, racing away down the line, growing smaller and smaller every minute. Soon it would draw in at the station a mile away, and Colin's father would fold his evening paper and get out.

"I wonder if Dad saw me?" said Colin as the train rumbled away.

"I feel rather faint," said Barbara suddenly, and sat down against one of the gates. "Oh dear — how silly."

"It's just the excitement," said Peter, whose heart was thumping so hard in his chest that he found it quite difficult to speak. "My word, we didn't have much time. But we just did it!"

A shout came to their ears, and they turned. It was the policeman on a bicycle, with two or three men behind in a car.

It was a policeman on a bicycle.

"We just managed to open them in time"

"Hey — what are you doing on the lines, you children? Did anything happen to the gates?"

"No. We *just* managed to open them in time for the train," shouted back Peter.

"Well, I'm blessed," said the policeman, getting off his bicycle as the three men jumped out of their car.

"Did you remember the gates, when you found out who that man was who was knocked down?" asked Peter.

"Yes — the fellow managed to tell us at last," said the policeman. "I shot off at once — and these men came in their car as soon as they could. My word — when I saw the train racing by, I thought everything was up! I listened for the gates to be smashed — but no, the train just raced by as usual."

"You mean to say you kids opened them?" said one of the other men, astonished. "How did you think of such a thing?"

"We remembered who that man was — Williams, the crossing-gates man," said George. "Then we thought of the gates — and the train that was due — and we ran like hares to open them."

"We only *just* managed it," said Jack. "Whew — I'm dripping wet! They *were* heavy, those gates!"

"I'm melting, too!" said Barbara, who was still sitting down, but already looking a little better.

"Who *are* you children?" said another man, a big, burly fellow, looking at them hard. "You seem a jolly good bunch of kids, I must say! You've probably saved a nasty accident, you know!"

"We're the Secret Seven," said Peter proudly, and tapped his badge. "Ready to do any job of work, at any time!"

"So I see," said the man. "Well, I'm a railway official, so you can take it from me that you've saved us pounds and pounds of damage by opening those gates — besides possibly a horrid accident. The train *might* have swerved off the rails when it hit the gates."

"I'm jolly glad it didn't," said Colin. "My father's on that train! Wait till I tell him our tale tonight!"

"Well, before you do that, I'd like you to do

WHEN MOTHER LOOKS OUT OF THE WINDOW

When Mother looks out of the window,
She thinks she is just seeing me!
But she isn't — she's seeing a Captain
Sailing his ship on the sea!
Or maybe she's seeing a cowboy
Riding his horse all alone,

"We're the Secret Seven."

something else for me, if you will," said the big man, and winked at his two companions.

"What's that?" asked Peter, with visions of another exciting bit of work to do.

"Help me to eat a few ice-creams!" said the man. "You look so hot — you ought to cool down. And that would be a good way of doing it — don't you think so?"

"Oooh yes!" said everyone, and Barbara stood up at once. She felt quite prepared to eat three ice-creams if this man offered them!

The two men with him went to swing the gates back across the lines again, so that people might pass over on foot or in cars. The big man jumped into his car, and told the children to follow him to the ice-cream shop down the road.

Soon they were all sitting together, with such enormous ice-creams in front of them that they really couldn't believe their eyes.

"This is the biggest ice-cream I've ever had in my life," said Peter.

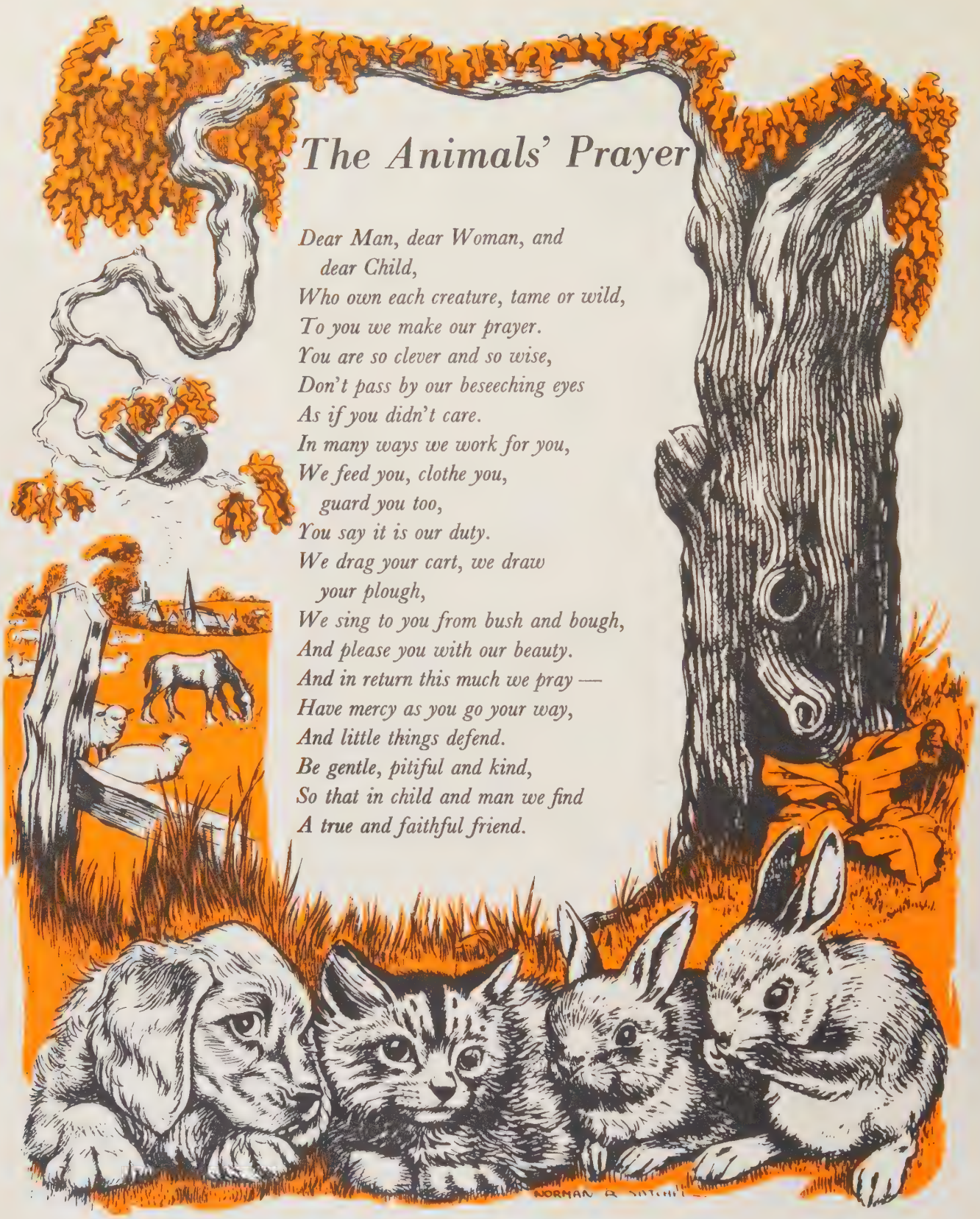
"You deserve it, old son," said the big man, who was eating an ice-cream, too. "How in the world did you open those gates in time? You had only a few minutes to race away from Williams, get down to the crossing, and swing back those heavy gates, I don't know *how* you did it!"

"Yes — you're right," said Peter, thinking about it. "*I* don't quite know how we did it, either. But the thing is — we *did* it!"

Well, that's really all that matters, Secret Seven. You saw what had to be done — and YOU DID IT!

Or an Indian Chief in his feathers
Stalking a foe on his own.
She calls out, "Hey, Timmy, I want you!"
But Timmy (that's me) is away
I'm flying a plane, I'm a pilot,
I'm up in the clouds all day!
(It's only in bed that I'm Timmy,
Because it wouldn't be fair.
For Mother to come up and kiss me
And find a Red Indian there!)

"This is the biggest ice-cream I've ever had in my life!"



The Animals' Prayer

Dear Man, dear Woman, and
dear Child,
Who own each creature, tame or wild,
To you we make our prayer.
You are so clever and so wise,
Don't pass by our beseeching eyes
As if you didn't care.
In many ways we work for you,
We feed you, clothe you,
guard you too,
You say it is our duty.
We drag your cart, we draw
your plough,
We sing to you from bush and bough,
And please you with our beauty.
And in return this much we pray —
Have mercy as you go your way,
And little things defend.
Be gentle, pitiful and kind,
So that in child and man we find
A true and faithful friend.

THE BONFIRE AT NIGHT

Bonfire, you're a merry fellow
With your flames of red and yellow,
And your cheery cracks and pops —
You gobble up the old bean-props,
The pea-sticks, withered plants, and all
The leaves blown down beside the wall.
Your never-ending spires of smoke
(The colour of a pixie's cloak)
Go mounting to the starry sky,
And when the wind comes bustling by
Oh, what a merry game you play,
And how you pop and roar away!
Your heart is red, your smoke is thick,
Oh, pile on leaves and branches, quick!
Let's dance around and shout and sing,
Oh, Bonfire, you're a LOVELY thing!

On Dorset Hills

A dozen larks sweep upward from my feet
As I come by,
And in the hazy sky
They soar on wings that with their quivering beat
Keep tremulous time to sibilant sweet song
That downward spills
Like rainfall on the hills,
Cascading round me, wild and sweet and strong.
And I and every living thing are held
In sheer delight;
The daisy, petalled white,
With golden eye upturned, is magic-spelled,
And primroses that nestle cheek to cheek
As children do,
Are still with listening too.
Bewitched the blackbird sits with silent beak,
Dumb is the strident wren, the yaffle stays
His laughing cry,
And rabbits running by
Are sudden all enchanted with amaze.
Oh voice of Spring, of Youth, heart's mad delight,
Sing on, sing on,
And when the sun is gone
I'll warm me with your echoes through the night.

UNCLE Nat's pond was a lovely place. It was an old pond set behind a hedge in a field. The children had gone there with their nets.

"It's a good thing for us there are no ducks," said Uncle Nat. "They wouldn't leave us much

Caddis Grub

to see. Now, dip in your nets."

Peter and Mary dipped in their nets. Mary brought hers up and gave a squeal. "I've caught two funny little things. Tadpoles, Uncle."

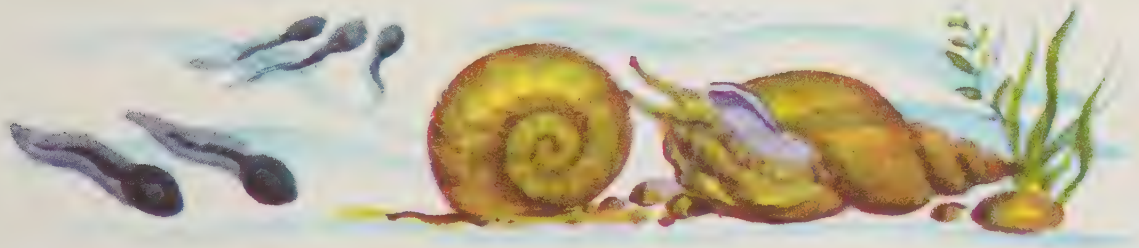
"They *were*," said Uncle Nat, "but now they are little half-frogs. You remember that tadpoles grow into frogs, don't you?"

Water Beetle

"Look what *I've* got — snails!" said Peter, dragging in his net. "Two kinds, Uncle Nat. Can I take these home?"

"Yes, they will live in a friendly manner with the tadpoles," said Uncle Nat. "Aha, Mary has a beetle. There are two kinds of large water-beetles, Mary: a fierce one that quite likes a feast of tadpoles, and a peaceful one that eats water-weed. You have caught the fierce one."

"Oh then I'd better not put him with my tadpoles, had I?" said Mary. "I don't want them to be eaten."



The beetle went back into the pond, very pleased. Then Uncle Nat put *his* net in, and pushed it about in the mud at the bottom of the pond. He let the water drain out of it and then held it up.

"Caddis-grubs! Just what I hoped. Look, children, these queer little grubs have such a soft body that they make themselves cases to live in."

The children stared at the curious grubs in their tube-like homes. They had stuck together odd bits of pond-stuff and made themselves hard little cases.

"They stick their heads out of their front doors," said Peter in delight.

"They will live at peace with our tadpoles and snails," said Uncle Nat, putting them in the jar. "I should like to take some of those little darting fish back too. Do you see them? They might build one of their dear hard little nests!"

"Nests!" said Mary, "I didn't know that fish ever built nests!"

"Well, sticklebacks do," said Uncle Nat. "We must keep a pair one day and watch them building. Now come along home or we shall be late!"

Flash the Pony

This is a chapter from a book called THE CHILDREN AT GREEN MEADOWS, which tells the story of three children who love animals, and have all kinds of pets. They have always longed for a pony, and in this extract you will read how Francis managed to rescue one.

ONE night something happened. Francis woke up to see a curious light in the sky. What could it be? He jumped out of bed to find out. He looked through the window and saw that there was a fire blazing somewhere.

"I must dress," he thought. "I'm a Scout, and I ought to go and see if I can help. I can at least fill pails of water till the fire-brigade comes."

He was soon out of doors. He didn't wake anyone else. It would only worry Mother and Granny to see the fire and Daddy couldn't possibly go and help. Rex whined to go with him, but Francis shut his ears to Rex for once, as he passed near the kennel.

The fire was at the back of the greengrocer's shop. People were milling about there in a crowd, shouting, and trying to help. The fire-engine hadn't arrived.

"The sheds that the greengrocer uses for his stores and for his delivery boys' bicycles are on fire," said a man. "Goodness knows how it happened, this fire. The greengrocer was taken to hospital today, and his wife's spending the night there with him, he's so bad."

"Nobody's in the shop part at all then?" said a woman. "Well, we must try and save it from burning down — it's bad enough that old Miller's sheds should be burnt down, and him in hospital too!"

A man went by dragging a garden hose. Francis ran to help him. Pails of water were being passed up by a chain of helpers, and the sizzling of water on flames was very loud. A horrible smell of smoke was blown around Francis, and he choked.

He ran out of the smoke, coughing. And then he heard a noise that went right through his heart.

It was the sound of a horse, whinnying in terror! A horse! Where was it? Not in the sheds, surely?

Francis ran to the chain of helpers. "I heard a horse whinnying. Is there one anywhere? Quick, tell me?"

"Why, that would be little Flash the pony,"

said the man. "We forgot all about him. I reckon old Miller kept him in one of these sheds. Poor little thing!"

Francis flew off at once, his heart beating fast. He heard the whinnying again, and ran in the direction it came from. It seemed to come from the last shed of all, where hungry flames were just licking the roof, reaching out from another shed near by.

Francis went to the shed. Yes, the pony must be inside. He heard the frantic sound of hooves as the animal ran round and round the shed, banging into the sides. It whinnied in panic.

The boy had his Scout's staff with him. When he found that the pony's door was locked, he began to rain blows on the old wooden door with his staff. Some of the strips of wood broke, and Francis tore them out. The flames came nearer, and the boy panted as he struck the door again and again.

A man came up to help. He was big and strong, and he soon broke the door down. Francis pushed himself inside while the man went on making the hole bigger. He found the pony very quickly, because the frightened creature ran right into him, almost knocking him over.

Francis caught its mane and held on tightly. He called soothingly to the little thing. "It's all right. You're safe with me. Come along!"

Somehow, he never quite knew how, he got the pony out of the broken-down doorway. He held on tightly to its mane, for the little creature was frantic, and it was only its fear of leaving this boy that stopped it from bolting.

Francis led the pony right away from the fire, and made it stand still. It was trembling from head to foot. Francis couldn't see what the little creature was like in the dark, he only knew that it was small and had a long, thick mane.

He stroked and patted the velvety nose, and spoke in his low, calm voice, saying all sorts of nonsense — but nonsense or not, the pony seemed to understand, and quietened down. It suddenly thrust its head against the boy's shoulder and left it there. Francis was too thrilled for words. It was just as if the little horse had said, "All right. You're my friend. I'll trust you and do what you say!"

The man who had helped to break down the door came to find Francis. "Hallo, Scout!" he said. "You did a jolly good deed in rescuing that terrified little creature. Is he all right now?"

"I think so," said Francis. "What is to happen to him?"

"Goodness knows!" said the man. "All the sheds are gone now — even the one the pony was in. We've saved the shop and the rooms over it, though. Bad luck, for poor old Miller."

"Yes. Awfully bad luck," said Francis. "But what about the pony, sir? I'm afraid he'll bolt if I leave him."

"Where can he go, now?" wondered the man. "He ought to be stabled for the night — but it's so late."

A brilliant idea suddenly flashed into Francis's mind. The old stables at Green Meadows!

"I think I know what to do," he told the man. "I come from Green Meadows — that big old house, you know, not far from the new blocks of flats. Well, we have some old stables there. I could take him there for the night."

A man came up to help break the door down.

"Good idea! Splendid!" said the man. "That will be one good thing done. I'll tell the police you're doing that — they've been asking about the pony. They can come and see you about him tomorrow morning."

So by the light of a rather small moon, Francis led the little pony back to Green Meadows. It went with him willingly. It liked this boy and trusted him. Its little hooves clip-clopped along the road, and in at the back gate, and up to the stables.

"In you go, Flash," said Francis. "That's right. What a good little thing you are. Now, just stand there while I tie you to the post. Can't have you wandering about, you know. I'll get you some straw to lie on. And would you like some water to drink?"

Flash would! Flash was very thirsty indeed, and drank a lot of water from the pail Francis brought. The boy couldn't think what to give him to eat, but he remembered the apples up in the stable loft — getting rather flabby and uneatable now, for it was April. Still, Flash didn't seem to mind at all. He munched four apples with pleasure, and gave little 'hrrr-rrumphs' of thanks. He wasn't really hungry — but the apples were an unexpected treat in the middle of the night.

It was cold in the stables, because the doors were always left open. Francis fetched an old rug and threw it over the pony. "There!" he said. "You can stand up and sleep or lie down and sleep, just as you like. I don't know enough about horses to know which you do!"

He shut the stable doors and went creeping back to the house. Nobody had awakened, nobody at all! Francis was just taking off his clothes when he heard a loud whinny from the distant stables.

It was Flash. He didn't like being alone. He had remembered the flames and the noise and the heat. He felt lonely and strange in these stables. He wanted that boy.

"Well! I can't have him whinnying all night and waking everyone up," thought Francis. "I'd better spend the night in the stables. But I'll want a good supply of rugs."

He had taken off his scout uniform. He pulled on some shorts, two jerseys, and put his long thick dressing-gown over the top. He pulled his eiderdown off his bed and then fetched two rugs from the hall cupboard. Surely he would be warm enough now!

Rex heard him creeping down the path and began to bark from his kennel. Goodness! Now *he* would wake everyone up! Francis stole down to the dog.

"Be quiet, you silly! It's only me. Do you want to come with me? All right — but don't frighten Flash!"

They came to the stables. Flash was lying down in the straw, wide awake. He gave a little whinny when he heard Francis and smelt him.

Francis made himself a pile of straw beside Flash and burrowed into it, on top of a rug. He wrapped himself up in the eiderdown, and pulled the second rug on top of him. Rex flopped down on his legs, and made a nice warm spot there. Flash made another on his left side! In fact, Flash was so very warm that Francis soon threw off the rug.

The pony was happy and at peace. That boy was here with him. He was safe. There was a dog too, but if he was the boy's friend, well, that was all right!

(You will be glad to know that little Flash lived in the children's orchard after the adventure, and was loved and looked after by Francis and his brother and sister.)

The pony was happy and at peace.

JESUS and the children

JESUS always loved little children, and they loved Him. They knew He would welcome them, wherever He was, and they loved the stories He told them.

One day, when Jesus was talking to the people, some mothers and fathers, who had small children, thought they would take them to Jesus for Him to bless them and put His wonderful hands on them.

So they gathered together their little ones, carrying some in their arms, with others toddling at their sides, and they went to find Jesus.

The disciples saw them coming with the children. One of the mothers spoke to them eagerly. "We have brought our children to Jesus. It will make such a difference to them if He would bless them. It would help them to grow up good and kind. He is such a wonderful man."

"He's busy," said a disciple, rather unkindly. "He can't see you just now."

"He is talking to many people," said another disciple. "He can't be bothered with children just now. Go away and come back later."

The parents were sad and disappointed. As they turned to go away Jesus saw their faces, and He called to his disciples:

"Bring the little children to me! Do not stop them coming. They belong to my kingdom just as you do — and, indeed, unless you have the open heart of a little child, you will not be able to enter my kingdom!"

So the mothers and fathers gladly brought their children to Him, and He took them into His arms one by one. He blessed them and loved them, and then He let them go.

MAWKINS THE HARE

A story from "Enid Blyton's Animal Lover's Book".

Richard and Susan love all animals, and have for their great friend Zacky the gypsy, who knows all the animals and birds in the countryside. Here he brings to them Mawkins the Hare.

RICHARD and Susan were out on a walk with their friend, Zacky the gipsy. They came to a thicket of gorse and briar. Here were big tufts of rank grass that made them stumble as they went. Zacky sat down on one and took out his hare-pipe.

"Zacky," began Susan, but he frowned quickly and she stopped, alarmed at the sound of her voice, suddenly loud in that deserted corner. She sat as still as a frightened mouse.

Zacky put his strange little pipe to his lips. The children expected a whistle to come from it, but instead there came a curious grunting noise, low and regular.

"Oont, oont, oont," said the pipe. Then Zacky stopped for a few seconds. He put the pipe to his lips again and once more the curious sound came. "Oont, oont."

There was the slightest rustling noise from a thick bramble not far off. The children held their breath and looked hard. Two great ears appeared, and then two enormous eyes. The hare!

Again the pipe sounded its call-note, and the hare leapt from the bush in one big bound. He fixed his eyes on Zacky, and with another leap was by his knee.

"Mawkins," said Zacky softly, in the special voice that he kept for animals and birds. "Mawkins, so you are still there. How's the leg, Mawkins? Can you run as fast as ever?"

The hare made exactly the same noise as the pipe had made, "Oont." The two children could hardly breathe. They had never in their lives kept so still. They looked and looked at the big hare.

He was lovely. His fur was russet-red on his back, and his ears were very long and were tipped with black. His great eyes took in everything around him. No wonder he could see danger a long way off with those enormous eyes!

Richard saw his strong back legs. He could leap high and far with those. The boy wished he could fondle the hare as Zacky was doing. He watched the gipsy scratch the fur under the hare's whiskered chin, while the animal stretched out his head in delight.

And then, almost in an instant, the hare disappeared! Something startled him and he was gone with one great leap. They could see him bounding down the hill.

"There he goes," said Zacky, putting away his pipe. "Do you notice how he leaps to one side now and again? That's to break the scent of his trail."

"Zacky, he's *lovely*," said Richard. "I never saw even a rabbit so close before. Tell us about your friend Mawkins. He doesn't live in a burrow like a rabbit, does he?"

"Oh, no — he's an open-air creature," said Zacky. "He lives in the thickets and fields. Let's see if we can find his resting-place somewhere here. It's called a form."

"Why?" asked Susan, thinking of the forms at school.

"Because it's just a big dent in the ground exactly the form or shape of the hare's body," said Zacky. "See — here is one, though whether

it belongs to my friend Mawkins I don't know."

He showed them a dent in the long grass, the size and shape of the hare's long body. The hare had chosen the place, shuffled his body up and down in the grass until he had made a good depression there, and had then used it every day for a hiding-place. The blades of grass partly covered the "form".

"It's a good place," said Richard. "And I should think his colouring helps to hide him too, Zacky, doesn't it? Don't hares lie up in open fields, too? Can we find a 'form' in that field there, do you think?"

"Maybe," said Zacky, and they went to see. Zacky found one almost at once. It was just a dent in the ground, but now that the children knew what they were looking for they could quite well see that it was a hare's resting-place. The outline of his body was clear.

"When the doe — the mother-hare — has young ones, they are not born helpless," said Zacky. "They are covered with hair, and their eyes are wide open. Funny little creatures they are, half grown-up when they're born, seemingly! In no time at all they move away from their mother and make little forms of their own — and there they lie listening all day long, waiting for their mother to come to them."

"I wish I could see one," said Susan longingly.

"You'd love them," said Zacky. "Prettiest little things they are. I once took one and fed it from a bottle. It stayed with me for a long time and was as frisky as a skippity lamb."

"I wish things like that happened to me," said Richard. "Where's Mawkins the hare gone to now, Zacky?"

"He may be miles away," said Zacky. "He travels fast with those long legs of his leaping away — fifteen feet at a time he can jump when he wants to. No wonder the fox gives up the chase!"

"But can't the fox follow the scent of his trail?" asked Susan.

"I told you to notice how the hare jumps to one side now and again," said Zacky. "That big sideways jump breaks the scent, and puzzles the fox or the dog. And sometimes I've seen a hare run round and round in circles and then leap fifteen feet to one side and be off and away for good. When the dog comes up he follows the scent in the circle and he goes round and round till he's giddy. The trail is perfect in the circle, you see."

"That's clever," said Richard. "Very clever. I suppose the dog doesn't think that the hare might have leapt to one side. What else can the hare do?"

"Well, old Mawkins sometimes doubles back on his trail," said Zacky. "He'll be going along in a straight line, and he'll stop, turn round and run back on exactly the same trail. Then he'll do his trick of leaping to one side and breaking the trail — maybe into a marsh that won't hold any scent of him."

"I see! Up comes the dog on the trail and doesn't know the hare has doubled back — so there he is sniffing at a sudden end to the scent and he doesn't know why!" said Susan.

"Listen," said Zacky, suddenly, his eyes shining. "We're in luck! Listen."

They stood as still as statues, listening. On the evening air came strange sounds, something like

grunt and whistle combined. Then Richard recognised the noise.

"It's like your hare-pipe!" he said. "I can hear the 'Oont, oont' noise."

"Yes — it's two hares at play," said Zacky. "Sit down. Maybe they will come into view. You've heard folks say 'as mad as a March Hare,' haven't you? Well, maybe you'll see some mad hares in a minute!"

They sat down behind a briar bush and made spy-holes through it, looking down on a grassy hillside. And, quite suddenly, two hares came into view. Susan stared in amazement. They were certainly quite mad!

They leapt into the air continually, they bucked and they reared, they ran round and round in circles, and then they began to leap right over each other. "Oont, oont," they said, and danced about madly again.

"They played leap-frog," thought Susan, but she didn't dare to utter a word. Why, this was as good — no, better — than going to a circus!

And then a third hare came on the scene! He was a big fellow, and he joined in the mad antics. But one of the two hares didn't welcome him at all. He suddenly made a rush at the newcomer and struck him with a front paw.

In a trice both hares were up on their hind-legs, and were boxing each other with their fists! The children watched in amazement. Why, they were *boxing*! But one of them suddenly stopped boxing with his front paws, turned himself round, and, as he did so, kicked out with his strong back-legs at his opponent.

The other was knocked flat. He gave a squeal and got up. He took one look at the other hare and then ambled off. He had had enough!

Richard laughed — and the other two hares pricked up their long ears and were off like lightning! Down the hillside, and into the field and across it. As swift as the wind! How big they looked as they ran, their ears bobbing up and down, their bodies stretched to the utmost.

"Oh, *Richard*!" said Susan, crossly. "You've scared them away."

"Yes. I just couldn't help laughing," said Richard, vexed with himself. "I've never seen anything so comical in my life. But I didn't mean to frighten them like that."

"Never mind — they had about finished," said Zacky. "You're in luck's way this evening — watching a show like that!"

"Please could I just blow your hare-pipe and see if I can make Mawkins come?" asked Susan.

Zacky wiped it and gave it to her. She set it to her mouth. The rather mournful sound came out: "Oont, oont, oont."

"It sounds a bit like 'Don't, don't,' " said Richard. "I'm surprised that the hare who got such a kick didn't say 'Don't, don't', instead of squealing!"

"Hares always squeal or scream if they are hurt or frightened," said Zacky. "That's how I found Mawkins one night. He was caught in a trap and he screamed just like a child in pain, poor thing."

"What did you do?" said Susan, though she guessed, of course!

"I went out and found him, and brought him to my waggon," said Zacky. "His hurt leg mended well, as you saw. He's a good friend, is old Mawkins the hare — he's never forgotten me!"

(A story from *Enid Blyton's Twelfth Bedside Book)*

THERE were once four wise men who travelled in a strange country with their servant. They rode upon horses, and when night came and the world was dark, they leapt from their horses and told their servant to make a shelter for the night.

But as he was doing this, the horses gave a frightened whinny and galloped away into the darkness! The wise men scolded the dismayed servant and bade him catch the horses.

"But, sirs, how can I do that?" asked the servant. "It is a black night and I do not know where the horses have gone. You should have tied them to a tree. I was building you a shelter, and did not know that you had left the horses loose."

"That is the worst of having a foolish man for a servant!" said one of the wise men. "If he had been as wise as we are, such a thing would never have happened!"

Just then he bumped into something enormous, and he stood still in surprise. It was an elephant who had come wandering by, and had frightened the horses, who did not like the smell of the strange beast. The wise man ran his hands over the great side of the elephant. He pushed it. It did not move.

"Here is a great rock!" cried the wise man. "We will shelter beneath it for the night!"

The others came up. One felt the elephant's trunk-like leg, and laughed. "This is no rock!" he said. "This is a tree — a great forest tree! Its branches will shelter us well!"

The third wise man put out his hand to feel, and he took hold of the trunk, which wriggled and tried to get away from his hand.

"It is a snake," he cried in fear. "How can you say it is a rock or a tree? You are mad! Come away from here. I tell you it is a snake."

The fourth wise man also put out his hands to feel, and touched the tusks.

"It is a cow!" he said. "I feel its horns. Now we shall be able to have milk to drink."

"Does a snake have horns?" snorted the third wise man in scorn.

"It's a tree, I tell you!" said the second wise man, feeling the elephant's leg again.

"No, a great rock!" said the first one, pounding the elephant's hard side.

They then fell to quarrelling and fighting, and the poor servant stood in fear, wondering what would happen if they all killed each other.

"Masters, masters!" he cried. "You cannot all be right — and you cannot all be wrong, for you are so wise! Let me light my lantern and we will see what you have found."

"Foolish servant!" said the wise men.

And they all said again what they thought — one said a rock, another a tree, the third a snake, and the fourth a cow. The servant trembled and lighted his lantern. He held it up in the air and all five men looked to see what they had found.

"An elephant!" cried the servant in joy. "We will ride him to the nearest town. Masters, you are all wrong!"

"I tell you it was a rock!" said one. "No, a tree!" "No, a snake that wriggled!" "No, a cow with horns!"

"Well, I will leave you to your wisdom!" said the servant, climbing on to the elephant's neck. "I am but a foolish man, and it seems to *me* that this is an elephant. Better to be foolish and safe than wise and in danger! Good night, masters!"

He rode off — and what happened to the four wise men nobody ever knew!

THE MYSTERY OF THE VANISHED PRINCE

This is an exciting little incident from THE MYSTERY OF THE VANISHED PRINCE. A small prince has been kidnapped, and Fatty thinks that he is hidden in an old farmhouse. So off he and his friends go to find out — and suddenly they are captured and locked up by two men. But Fatty knows how to go through a locked door!

In silence the two men hurried the children along. Bets was frightened and kept close to Fatty. Ern was scared too, and forgot all about slapping at the flies. And all the time the helicopter hovered about overhead, evidently waiting for some signal to land.

Round a corner they came into a big farmyard. Pigs were in a sty, and hens wandered about. It looked very homely and countrified all of a sudden. Ducks quacked in a pond, and a horse lifted its head from a trough where it had been drinking, and stared at the little company.

A very big farmhouse lay back from the yard. Its tall chimneys showed that it was old — probably built in Elizabethan times. There was a small door in the wall of the farmhouse not far from them. The men hurried the children over to it, opened it, and shoved them all in, giving them a push if they thought anyone was not quick enough.

Down a long passage — up some narrow, curving stairs, along another passage, with wooden boards that were very old and uneven. The passage was dark, and Bets didn't like it at all. She slipped her hand into Fatty's and he squeezed it hard.

They came to a door. The man in front opened it. "In here," he said, and in they all went. Fatty put his foot in the doorway just as the man was about to shut them in.

"What are you doing this for?" he asked. "You know you'll get into trouble, don't you? We're only kids out on a walk. What's the mystery?"

"You'll be kept here for a day or two," said the man. "There are reasons. You came at an unfortunate time for yourselves. Be sensible and nothing will happen to you."

He kicked Fatty's foot away suddenly and slammed the door. The six children heard the key turning in the lock. Then they heard the footsteps of the two men as they hurried away down the passage.

Fatty looked desperately round the room. It was small and dark, lined with oak panels. There was one small window, with leaded panes. He ran to it and peered out. A sheer drop to the ground! Nobody could climb out there with safety.

"Fatty! What's all this about?" said Ern, in a frightened voice. "Sawful!"

"Shall I tell you what I think?" said Fatty, in a low voice. "I think the Prince Bongawah was taken here and hidden, when he was kidnapped from his car. And I think he's been kept prisoner here till arrangements could be made to spirit him away somehow — and that's what that helicopter is arriving for! It will land somewhere here, the Prince will be hurried aboard — and nobody will ever hear of him again!"

Bets shivered. "I don't like you saying that," she said. "Fatty, what are we going to do? Do you think they'll hurt us?"

"No," said Fatty. "I think we're a nuisance, but I think they really do believe we're only six kids out hiking. They've no idea we're hunting for old Goon, or that we know anything is going on here."

"But what are we going to *do?*" said Bets,

Two men suddenly rose up from the long grass and captured the children. In silence they hurried them along to the farmhouse.

again. "I don't like this place. I want to get out."

"I can hear the helicopter again," said Pip. "It sounds nearer. It must be coming down."

"Do you suppose Mr. Goon is a prisoner too?" said Larry. "We haven't seen or heard a sign of him. Perhaps he didn't come to Raylingham Marshes after all."

"Perhaps he didn't," said Fatty. He went over to the door and tried it. It was locked. He looked at the door. It was old but very stout and strong. Nobody could possibly break it down.

"Do your trick of getting out through a locked door, Fatty," said Daisy suddenly. "There's a good space under the door — I believe you could manage it beautifully."

"That's just what I was thinking," said Fatty. "The only thing is I need a newspaper — and I haven't brought a newspaper with me today. Very careless of me."

"I've got a comic," said Ern, unexpectedly. "Would that do? What are you going to do, Fatty?"

"Get through this locked door," said Fatty, much to Ern's amazement. Ern fished in his pocket and brought out a crumpled and messy comic, which he handed to Fatty.

"Good work," said Fatty, pleased. He took the comic and opened out the middle double sheet. He slid it carefully under the door, leaving only a small corner on his side. Ern watched, puzzled. How was that going to open a locked door?

Fatty took a small leather case from his pocket and opened it. In it were a number of curious small tools, and a little roll of wire. Fatty took out the wire and straightened it.

He inserted it into the keyhole and began delicately to work at the key. He prodded and pushed and jiggled it — until, suddenly, he gave a sharp push and the key slid out of the keyhole on the other side of the door, and fell with a thud down to the floor.

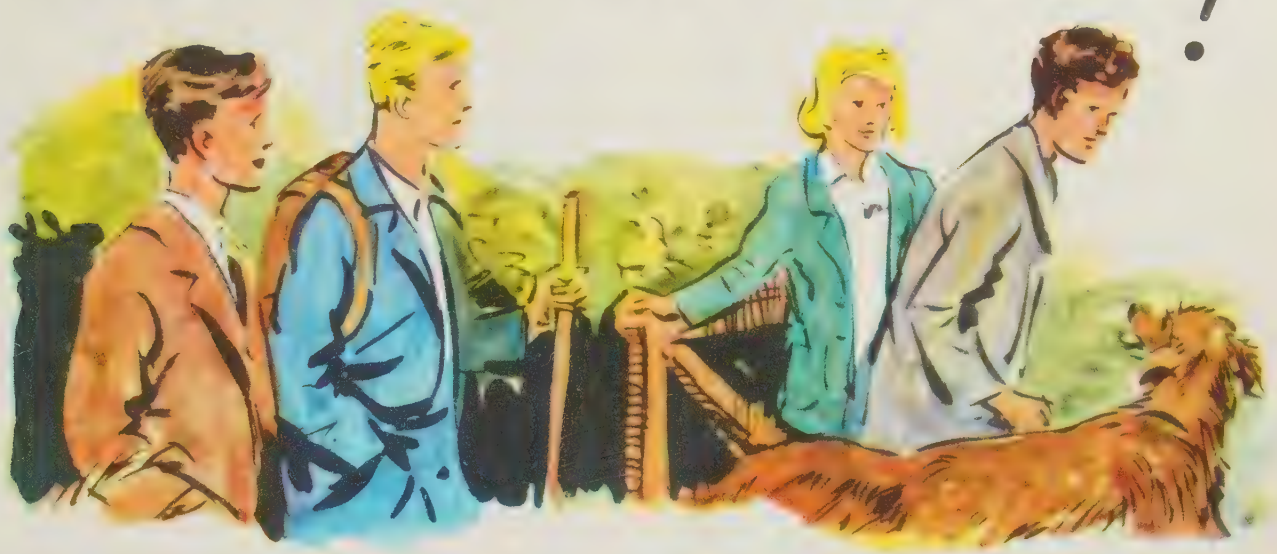
Ern stared open-mouthed. He couldn't for the life of him make out what Fatty was doing. But the others knew. They had seen Fatty doing his locked-door trick before!

"Hope it's fallen on to the comic," said Fatty, and bent down to draw the sheet of paper back under the bottom of the door. Carefully he pulled it, very carefully. More and more of the comic appeared, and oh joy, at last the key appeared too under the door, on the second half of the double sheet! There it was, on their side of the door. Fatty had managed to get it!

Ern gasped. His eyes almost fell out of his head. "Coo — you are a one!" he said to Fatty. "You're a genius, that's what you are."

"Be quiet, Ern," said Fatty. He slid the key into the lock on his side of the door and turned it. The door unlocked. Now they could all go free!

FIVE-AND A HALF-TERM ADVENTURE!



Most children know the "Famous Five" — Julian, Dick, George (short for Georgina) and Anne — and, of course, Timmy the dog. Here is a story of an adventure they had during half-term holiday.

THE Five were at Kirrin Cottage for a short half-term holiday. For once in a way both the boys' school and the girls' school had chosen the same weekend!

"It hardly ever happens that we can spend half-term together," said Anne, fondling Timmy. "And what luck to have such lovely weather at the beginning of November!"

"Four days off!" said George. "What shall we do?"

"Bathe!" said Julian and Dick together.

"*What*!" said their aunt, horrified. "Bathe in *November!* You must be mad! I can't allow that, Julian, really I can't."

"All right," said Julian, grinning at his aunt. "Don't worry. We haven't any swim-suits here."

"Let's walk over to Windy Hill," said Dick. "It's a grand walk, by the sea most of the way. And there may be blackberries and nuts still to find. I'd like a good walk."

"Woof," said Timmy at once, and put his big paw up on Dick's knee. He was always hoping to hear that magic word "Walk!"

"Yes, let's do that," said Anne. "Aunt Fanny, shall we take a picnic lunch — or is it too much bother to prepare?"

"Not if you help me," said her aunt, getting up. "Come along — we'll see what we can find. But remember that it gets dark very quickly in the afternoon now, so don't leave it too late when you turn back."

The Five set off half an hour later, with sandwiches and slices of fruit cake in a knapsack carried by Julian. Dick had a basket for any nuts or blackberries. His aunt had promised a blackberry-and-apple pie if they *did* find any berries for picking.

Timmy was very happy. He trotted along with the others, sniffing here and there, and barking at a curled-up hedgehog in a hole in a bank.

"Now, leave it alone," said George. "You really should have learnt by now that hedgehogs are not meant to be carried in your mouth, Timmy! Don't wake it up — it's gone to sleep for the winter!"

"It's a heavenly day for the beginning of November," said Anne. "The trees still have their leaves — all colours, red, yellow, brown, pink — and the beeches are the colour of gold."

"Blackberries!" said Dick, catching sight of a bush whose sprays were still covered with the black fruit. "I say — taste them — they're as sweet as sugar!"

As soon as blackberries were to be seen on bushes here and there, the Five slowed up con-

"Now, leave it alone," said George.

siderably! The blackberries that were still left were big and full of sweetness.

"They melt in my mouth!" said George. "Try one, Timmy!" But Timmy spat the blackberry out in disgust.

"Manners, Timmy, manners!" said Dick at once, and Timmy wagged his big tail and pranced round joyfully.

It was a good walk but a slow one. They found a hazel-nut copse and filled the basket with nuts that had fallen to the ground. Two red squirrels sat up in a nearby tree and chattered at them crossly. This was *their* nut copse!

"You can spare us a few!" called Anne. "I expect you've hundreds hidden away for the winter."

They had their lunch on the top of Windy Hill. It was not a windy day, but, all the same, there was a good breeze on the top, and Julian decided to sit behind a big gorse bush for shelter. "We'll be in the sun and out of the wind then," he said. "Spread out the lunch, Anne!"

"I feel *terribly* hungry," said George. "I can't believe it's only just one o'clock, Julian."

"Well, that's what my watch says," said Julian, taking a sandwich. "Ha — ham and lettuce together — just what I like. Get away, Tim — I can't eat with you trying to nibble my sandwich, too."

It was a magnificent view from the top of the hill. The four children munched their sandwiches and gazed down into the valley below. A town lay there, comfortably sprawled in the shelter of the hills. Smoke rose lazily from the chimneys.

"Look — there's a train running along the railway-lines down there," said George. "It looks just like a toy one."

"It's going to Beckton," said Julian. "See — there's the station — it's stopping there. It really *does* look like a toy train!"

"Now it's off again, — on its way to Kirrin, I suppose," said Dick. "Any more sandwiches? What, none! Shame! I'll have a slice of cake then — hand over, Anne."

They talked lazily, enjoying being together again. Timmy wandered from one to the other, getting a titbit here and a scrap of ham there.

"I *think* I can see another nut copse over yonder — the other side of the hill," said George. "I vote we go and see what nuts we can find — and then we ought to be thinking of going back home. The sun is getting awfully low, Ju."

"Yes. It is, considering it's only about two o'clock," said Julian, looking at the red November sun hardly showing above the horizon. "Come on, then — let's get a few more nuts, and then go back home. I love that long path winding over the cliffs beside the sea."

They all went off to the little copse, and to their delight found a fine crop of hazel-nuts there. Timmy nosed about in the grass and brought mouthfuls of the nuts to George.

"Gosh — I must have forgotten to wind it up."

"Thanks, Timmy," said George. "Very clever of you — but I wish you could tell the bad ones from the good ones!"

"I say," said Dick, after a while, "the sun's gone, and it's getting dark. Julian, are you *sure* your watch is right?"

Julian looked at his watch. "It says just about two o'clock still," he said in surprise. "Gosh — I must have forgotten to wind it up or something. It's definitely stopped now — and it must have been very slow before!"

"Ass," said Dick. "No wonder George thought it was long past lunch-time when you said it was one o'clock. We'll never manage to get home before dark now — and we haven't any torches with us."

"That cliff-path isn't too good to walk along in the dark, either," said Anne. "It goes so near the edge at times."

"We'd better start back immediately," said Julian. "Awfully sorry about this — I never dreamed that my watch was wrong."

"I tell you what would be a better idea," said George. "Why don't we just take the path down into Beckton and catch the train to Kirrin? We'll be so late if we walk back, and Mother will be ringing up the police about us!"

"Good idea of yours, George," said Julian. "Come on — let's take the path while we can still see. It leads straight down to the town."

So away went the Five as fast as they could. It was dark when they reached the town, but that didn't matter, because the street lamps were alight. They made their way to the station, half-running down the main street.

"See, there's Robin Hood on at the cinema here," said Anne. "Look at the posters!"

"And what's that on at the hall over there?" said George. "Timmy, come here — oh, he's shot across the road. Come HERE, Timmy!"

But Timmy was running up the steps of the Town Hall. Julian gave a sudden laugh. "Look — there's a big Dog Show on there — and old Timmy must have thought he ought to go in for it!"

"He smelt the dogs there," said George, rather cross. "Come on — let's get him or we'll lose the next train."

The hall was plastered with posters of dogs of all kinds. Julian stopped to read them while George went in after Timmy.

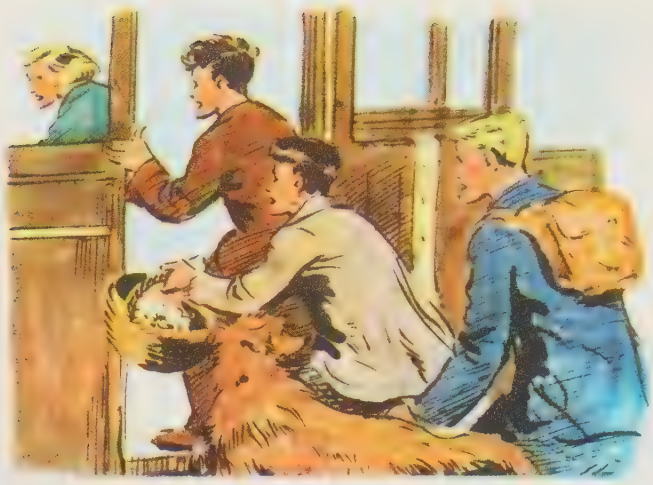
"Some jolly valuable dogs here," he said. "Some beauties, too — look at the picture of this white poodle. Ah — here comes Tim again, looking very sorry for himself. I bet he knows he wouldn't win a single prize — except for brains!"

"It was the doggy smell that made him go to see what was on," said George. "He was really cross because they wouldn't let him in!"

"Buck up — I think I can hear a train coming!" said Dick, and they all raced down the road to the station, which was quite near. The train puffed in as they went to the booking-office for their tickets. The guard was blowing his whistle and waving his flag as they rushed on to the platform. Dick pulled open the door of the last compartment and they all bundled in, panting.

"Gosh — that was a near squeak," said Dick, half-falling on to a seat. "Look out, Tim — you nearly had me over."

The four children got back their breath and looked round the carriage. It was not empty, as they had expected. Two other people were there, sitting at the opposite end, facing each



They all bundled in, panting.

other — a man and a woman. They looked at the Five, annoyed.

"Oh," said Anne, seeing the woman carrying a shawled bundle in her arms. "I hope we haven't woken your baby. We only *just* caught the train."

The woman rocked the little thing in her arms, and crooned to it, covering its head with a shawl — a rather dirty one, Anne noticed.

"Is she all right?" asked the man. "Cover her up more — it's cold in here."

"There, there now," crooned the woman, pulling the shawl tighter. The children lost interest and began to talk. Timmy sat still by George, very bored. Then he suddenly sniffed round, and went over to the woman. He leapt up on to the seat beside her and pawed at the shawl! The woman shrieked and the man shouted at Timmy.

"Stop that! Get down! Here, you kids, look after that great dog of yours. It'll frighten the baby into fits!"

"Come here, Timmy," said George at once, surprised that he should be interested in a baby. Timmy whined and went to George, looking back at the woman. A tiny whimpering noise came from the shawl, and the woman frowned. "You've waked her," she said, and began to talk to the man in a loud, harsh voice.

Timmy was *very* disobedient! Before George could stop him, he was up on the seat again, pawing at the woman and whining. The man leapt up furiously.

"Don't hit my dog, don't hit him, he'll snap at you!" shouted George — and mercifully just at that moment the train drew in at a station.

"Let's get out and go into another carriage," said Anne, and opened the door. The four of them, followed by a most unwilling Timmy, were soon climbing into a compartment near the engine. George looked crossly at Timmy.

"Whatever came over you, Tim?" she said. "You are *never* interested in babies! Now sit down and don't move!"

Timmy was surprised at George's cross voice, and he crept under the seat and stayed there. The train came to a little Halt, where there was a small platform, and stopped to let a few people get out.

"It's Seagreen Halt," said Dick, looking out. "And there go the man and woman and baby — I must say I wouldn't like them for a Mum and Dad!"

"It's *quite* dark now," said George, looking through the window. "It's a jolly good thing we just caught the train. Mother will be getting worried."

It was nice to be in the cosy sitting-room at Kirrin Cottage again, eating an enormous tea and telling George's mother about their walk. She was very pleased with the nuts and blackberries. They told her about the man and woman and baby, too, and how funny Timmy had been, pawing at the shawl.

"He was funny before that," said Anne, remembering. "Aunt Fanny, there was a dog-show on at Beckton, and Timmy must have read the

"It's Seagreen Halt," said Dick, looking out.

posters, and thought he could go in for it — because he suddenly dashed across the road and into the Town Hall where the show was being held!"

"Really?" said her aunt, laughing. "Well, perhaps he went to see if he could find the beautiful little white Pekinese that was stolen there today! Mrs. Harris rang up and told me about it — there was such a to-do. The little dog, which was worth five hundred pounds, was cuddled down in its basket one minute — and the next it was gone! Nobody was seen to take it, and though they hunted in every corner of the hall, there was no sign of the dog."

"Gracious!" said Anne. "What a mystery! How could anyone possibly take away a dog like that without being seen?"

"Easily," said Dick. "Wrap it in a coat, or pop it into a shopping basket and cover it up. Then walk through the crowd and out of the hall!"

"Or wrap it in a shawl and pretend it was a baby — like the little one in that dirty shawl in the train," said Anne. "I mean — we *thought* that was a baby, of course — but it could easily have been a dog — or a cat — or even a monkey. We couldn't see its face!"

There was a sudden silence. Everyone was staring at Anne and thinking hard. Julian banged his hand on the table and made them all jump.

"There's something in what Anne has just said," he said. "Something worth thinking about! Did anyone see even a glimpse of the baby's face — or hair? Did you, Anne — you were nearest?"

"No," said Anne, quite startled. "No, I didn't. I did try to see, because I like babies — but the shawl was pulled right over the face and head."

"And I say — don't you remember how interested *Timmy* was in it?" said George excited. "He's never interested in babies — but he kept *on* jumping up and pawing at the shawl."

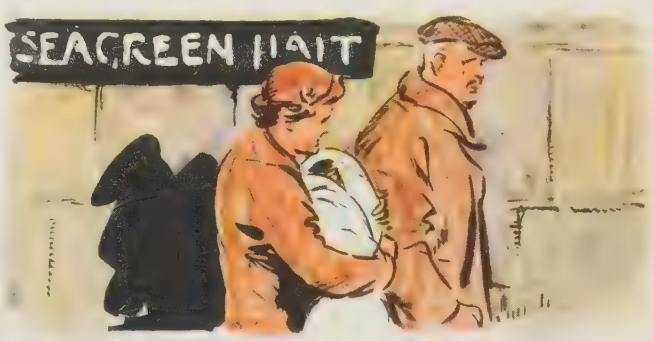
"And do you remember how the baby whimpered?" said Dick. "It was much more like a little dog whining than a baby, now I come to think of it. No wonder Timmy was excited! He *knew* it was a dog by the smell!"

"Whew! I say — this is jolly exciting," said Julian, getting up. "I vote we go to Seagreen Halt and snoop round the tiny village there."

"*No*," said Aunt Fanny firmly. "I will not have that, Julian. It's as dark as pitch outside, and I don't want you snooping around for dog-thieves on your half-term holiday."

"Oh, I *say*!" said Julian, bitterly disappointed.

"Ring up the police," said his aunt. "Tell them what you have just told me — they'll be



"There go the man and woman and baby."

able to find out the truth very quickly. They will be sure to know who has a baby and who hasn't — *they* can go round snooping quite safely!"

"All right," said Julian, sad to have a promising adventure snatched away so quickly. He went to the phone, frowning. Aunt Fanny *might* have let him and Dick slip out to Seagreen in the dark — it would have been such fun.

The police were most interested and asked a lot of questions. Julian told them all he knew, and everyone listened intently. Then Julian put down the receiver and turned to the others, looking quite cheerful again.

"They were jolly interested," he said. "And they're off to Seagreen Village straightaway in the police car. They're going to let us know what they find. Aunt Fanny — we *CANNOT* go to bed tonight till we know what happens!"

"No, we can't!" cried all the others, and Timmy joined in with a bark, leaping around excitedly.

"Very well," said Aunt Fanny, smiling. "What a collection of children you are — you can't even go for a walk without something happening! Now — get out the cards and let's have a game."

They played cards, with their ears listening for the ringing of the telephone bell. But it didn't ring. Supper time came and still it hadn't rung.

"It's no go, I suppose," said Dick gloomily. "We probably made a mistake."

Timmy suddenly began to bark, and then ran to the door, pawing at it.

"Someone's coming," said George. "Listen — it's a car!"

They all listened and heard the car stop at the gate — then footsteps came up the path and the front-door bell rang. George was out in a trice and opened it.

"Oh, it's the police!" she called. "Come in, do come in."

A burly policeman came in, followed by another. The second one carried a bundle in a shawl! Timmy leapt up to it at once, whining!

"Oh! It *wasn't* a baby, then!" cried Anne, and the policeman smiled and shook his head. He pulled the shawl away — and there, fast asleep, was a tiny white Pekinese, its little snub nose tucked into the shawl!

"Oh — the darling!" said Anne. "Wake up, you funny little thing!"

"It's been doped," said the policeman. "I suppose they were afraid of it whining in the night and giving its hiding-place away!"

"Tell us what happened," begged Dick. "Get *down*, Timmy. George, he's getting too excited — he wants the Peke to play with him!"

"Acting on your information we went to Seagreen," said the policeman. "We asked the porter what people got out of the train this evening, and if anyone carried a baby — and he said four people got out — and two of them were a man and woman, and the woman carried a baby in a shawl. He told us who they were — so away we went to the cottage . . ."

He pulled the shawl away.

"Woof," said Timmy interrupting, trying to get at the tiny dog again, but nobody took any notice of him.

"We looked through the back window of the cottage," went on the policeman, "and spotted what we wanted at once! The woman was giving the dog a drink of milk in a saucer — and she must have put some drug into it, because the little thing dropped down and fell asleep at once while we were watching."

"So in we went, and that was that," said the second policeman, smiling round. "The couple were so scared that they blurted out everything — how someone had paid them to steal the dog, and how they had taken their own baby's shawl, wrapped round a cushion — and had stolen the dog quite easily when the judging of the Alsatians was going on. They wrapped the tiny dog in the shawl, just as you thought, and caught the next train home!"

"I *wish* I'd gone to Seagreen Village with you," said Julian. "Do you know who told the couple to steal the little dog?"

"Yes — we're off to interview him now! He'll be most surprised to see us," said the burly policeman. "We've informed the owner that we've found her prize dog all right — but she feels so upset about it she says she can't collect it till the morning — so we wondered if you'd like to keep it for the night? Your Timmy can guard it, can't he?"

"Oh *yes*," said George in delight. "Oh, Mother — I'll take it to my room when I go to bed, and Timmy can guard the tiny thing as much as he likes. He'll love it!"

"We looked through the back window."

"Well — if your mother doesn't mind you having *two* dogs in your room, that's fine!" said the policeman, and signalled to the second man to give George the dog in the shawl. She took it gently, and Timmy leapt up again.

"No, Tim — be careful," said George. "Look what a tiny thing it is. You're to guard it tonight."

Timmy looked at the little sleeping Pekinese, and then, very gently, he licked it with the tip of his pink tongue. This was the tiny dog he had smelt in the train, covered up in the shawl. Oh yes — Timmy had guessed at once!

"I don't know what your name is," said Dick, stroking the small silky head. "But I *think* I'll call you Half-term Adventure, though I don't know what that is in Pekinese!"

The two policemen laughed. "Well, good night, Madam, good night, children," said the burly one. "Mrs. Fulton, the dog's owner, will call tomorrow morning for her Peke. He won a hundred-pound prize today — so I dare say you'll get some of that for a reward! Good night!"

The Five didn't want a reward, of course — but Timmy had one for guarding the little Peke all night. It's round his neck now — the finest studded collar he has ever had in his life! Good old Timmy!

THE LITTLE MINER

ONE Sunday afternoon, when Uncle Nat and Peter and Mary were walking across the fields, Peter saw something that surprised him.

"Look at all those funny little hillocks," he said. "What made them?"

"Miner the Mole made them," said Uncle Nat. "Haven't you ever seen a mole? He's a fine miner. He has spades for hands."

"What do you mean, Uncle?" said Mary in astonishment.

"Watch," said Uncle Nat suddenly, and he pointed down the field. "Is that a hillock I see coming up slowly in the grass?"

It was. Quietly the three hurried over to it and watched it rising. Miner the Mole must be there.

He was; for suddenly a little snout poked out of the ground. Quickly Uncle Nat picked up the little grey creature and showed him to the children.

"Here's the little miner of our fields. Feel his velvety coat, and notice that you can stroke the fur both ways, not just from head to tail as with most animals. You can't see his eyes because they are buried deep in his fur."

"Look at his hands," cried Mary. "Oh, you were right, Uncle; they are just like spades, and are turned outwards ready to dig. What big strong claws he has too! No wonder he throws up so much earth."

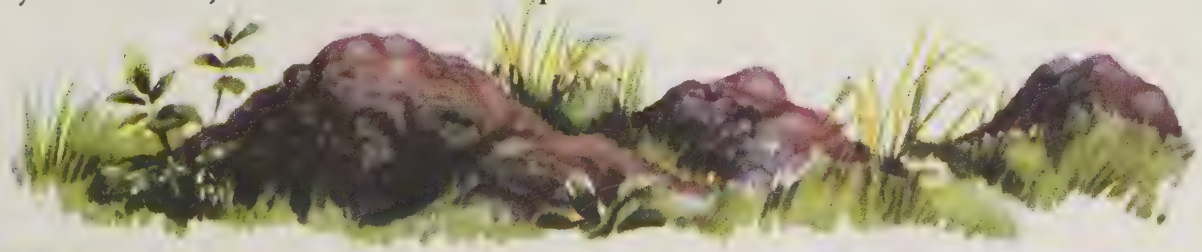
"Why doesn't he live above the ground?" asked Peter.

"He is always so hungry," said Uncle Nat. "He tunnels after grubs and beetles, worms and slugs. They live in the ground, so he has to dig a way after them. He gets rid of a lot of pests for us, so we must not harm him, except when he spoils our lawns or crops, and then he must be stopped."

"He's wriggling, Uncle. Put him down," said Mary. So Uncle Nat put down the mole — and then, to the children's great surprise, he seemed to sink right down in the earth and disappear!

"See how fast he digs down," said Uncle Nat. "Now — up comes the earth in a hillock. We shall be able to see the way he goes by the line of hills he makes. Funny little Miner the Mole!"

"I like him," said Peter. "Good hunting, little mole! Gobble up beetles and slugs by the hundred, and Uncle Nat will be pleased with you."



Making a Bird-cake

TONY and Mollie were staying with their Uncle Jack and Aunt Jane at their little house in the country.

Aunt Jane had promised to show them how she made a splendid maize-cake for the birds each winter.

"Tony and I have cleaned the bird-table and spread it with food, and put fresh water into the dish," said Mollie. "The birds are having a fine time — but they say they *would* like a cake!"

"Dear me, you seem to understand their language very well," said Aunt Jane, laughing. "Come along, then, both of you — you shall make the maize-cake."

Aunt Jane put a big bowl on the kitchen table. She went to the store cupboard and took out some paper bags and tins. Mollie peeped into them.

"What's in these tins and bags?" she asked.

"This is maize meal," said Aunt Jane, shaking a large amount of it into the bowl. "It is very cheap. You can buy it at any seed-merchant's. The birds love it."

She took another bag and opened it. "You know what *this* is," she said, as she shook out the little brown seeds.

"Hemp-seed!" said Tony. "It is what we put on the bird-table each morning."

"Yes," said Aunt Jane. "And these little, round hard seeds in the tin are millet-seeds. Seed-eating birds really *love* those. Open the next tin for me, Tony, will you, and we'll put a little of the canary seed mixture into the bowl too."

"Can we help to mix all the seeds together?" asked Mollie, looking into the bowl. Aunt Jane nodded. Then the two children put in their hands and scrambled them about till the seeds were all well mixed. They liked feeling the little hard seeds running through their fingers.

"Now I want you to chop up some nuts for me," said Aunt Jane. "There are pea-nuts in that big bag — and there are brazil-nuts on the dish in the dining-room. Go and fetch seven or eight, Tony."

Soon the children were very busy chopping up the nuts with Aunt Jane's little kitchen knives. It was fun, though they had to be very careful not to cut their fingers.

"Now put the chopped-up nuts into the bowl," said Aunt Jane. "You have chopped them up nice and small."

Into the bowl went the nuts too. "What next?" asked Mollie. "It looks a good mixture, Aunt Jane."

"I've some fat melting in that pan on the stove," said Aunt Jane. "Last week's dripping. We pour that over the whole mixture next."

"Let *me!*" cried Tony. But Aunt Jane shook her head.

"No," she said, "children are not allowed to play about with boiling fat. *I* shall pour it in. If I hadn't any fat, I would use boiling water."

"Aunt Jane, let's put in a few currants too," said Tony suddenly seeing a bag of currants on the dresser. "I should think the berry-eating birds would like those."

"They would," said Aunt Jane. "The thrushes and blackbirds never say 'No' to a currant. Very well, empty some in whilst I get the fat."

Tony shook in a good supply of currants, and then he and Mollie gave the mixture a last stir. Up came Aunt Jane with the pan of boiling fat. She poured it in carefully over the mixture, stirring with a long spoon.

"There!" she said. "Our cake is made."

"Do we cook it now?" asked Mollie.

"It doesn't need to be cooked," said Aunt Jane. "That's the nice part about this cake. I just put the whole mixture into a cloth and let it dry. Then, when it's dry, I shall take off

the cloth, and cut a slice from the cake whenever you want one for your birds."

"Will it keep, then?" asked Mollie.

"All the winter," said Aunt Jane. She took an old tea-cloth and emptied the mixture into it. Then she tied it all up tightly, and gave it to Tony to hang up in the garden-shed till it was dry.

"Then you and Mollie shall take off the cloth and see your bird-cake," she said.

"Oh, Aunt Jane, isn't it easy to do!" cried Mollie. "I'm surprised that more people don't make cakes for the birds. It's fun!"

"They would if they knew about it," said Tony. "I shall tell everybody now. Come and put it in the shed, Mollie. Thank you very much, Aunt Jane!"

When the cloth felt perfectly dry, in a day or two's time, the children unwrapped the cake.

"Oh, isn't it lovely!" cried Mollie. "It's hard and knobbly — and look, you can see the seeds and the currants all over it!"

"It's a funny shape," said Tony. "But that doesn't matter. Let's take it to Auntie and show her."

They carried it carefully to Aunt Jane. She gave them an old enamel plate to stand it on. "Now you shall cut the birds a slice for their table," she said. "Mollie, you can cut the first slice, and Tony can cut a slice tomorrow."

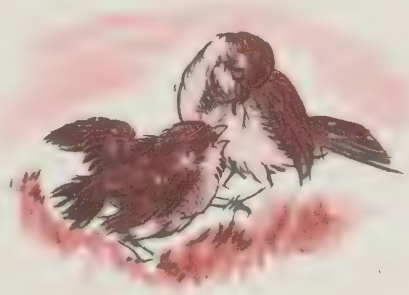
Mollie cut a good slice. It really looked delicious. "I wish I could have a bite," she said.

"No, you mustn't," said Aunt Jane at once. "It is not meant for children. It is always dangerous for girls and boys to eat food prepared for animals or birds. For one thing, there might be berries in a bird-cake — I often put them in if I have some by me — and yew berries, for instance, are very poisonous to children."

"Let's put the slice on the bird-table," said Tony. So they went outside and placed the slice of cake in the middle of the bird-table. Then they went to the dining-room window to watch.

All the birds loved the bird-cake! The sparrows and finches pecked the seeds out of it. The tits pecked at the chopped-up nuts. The blackbirds and thrushes took the currants, and the starlings liked the fat. Even the robins came to have a taste. It *was* fun to watch them all.

"I think our bird-table must be the most crowded one in the country," said Mollie. And I really think she was right.



Let's have a club of our own:

2

(This is the second part of the "Let's have a Club" story, of which the first part showed you how to form a club and what to do about it. It told you how a group of children, very like yourselves, wanted to form a club, and how they held their first meeting, and decided such things as who should be Leader, what password to have, and what name to choose for their club — and the kind of badge. This time you will read about their second meeting, and how they decided what aims they meant to have, and what secret signal, and so on.)

It was fun to be a club of six children — fun to meet and whisper the password, "cluck-cluck!" and exciting to think of the badges that the two girls were making for the Sturdy Six to wear! Friday evening seemed a long time in coming — but at last it was half-past five and the six were once again in the hen-house in Mark's garden.

It looked different! Katie had brought an old rug to sit on. Mark had found an old stool and a box or two. Dick brought a bottle of orangeade and two plastic mugs, which he proudly set down at the back, ready for the meeting's end. Eric produced a bag of peppermints.

"It's beginning to look quite homey," said Mollie, looking round the henhouse. "I'd better make a curtain for the tiny window."

Mark had arrived early, at twenty-past five, ready to admit and welcome each member, and to insist on the password being said. He knew that a certain amount of formality was necessary if the club was to be a serious one, and not a matter of giggles and nonsense. He meant the Sturdy Six to be a fine club, which would win respect from anyone outside it — not a stupid senseless one with no aims, no rules, no proper discussions. Yes — Mark was a good leader, and the others knew it when they chose him!

"Now, the meeting must begin," said Mark, when everyone had settled down. "First, the badges."

Mollie and Katie produced them proudly. They really were very good. They had begged fair-sized buttons from Mollie's mother, and had covered them with bits of navy blue material, on which they had embroidered the letters S.S. in red. At the back were small safety pins, sewn on strongly.

"Thanks awfully, Mollie and Katie," said Mark, as he handed them round. "They're smashing!"

"People will think we are the Secret Seven, not the Sturdy Six," said Katie. "S.S. stands for both."

"That doesn't matter," said Dick. "*We* know what our S.S. stands for! I must say I feel jolly proud of mine. Oh, Eric — you said the password 'cluck-cluck' so like a hen when you passed me in the school corridor yesterday that you made me jump!"

"Are we going to decide on a secret signal?" asked James. "I've thought of one, if so."

"What is it?" said Mollie.

"Just this," said James, and lightly touched his two shoulders, one with each hand, putting them down again at once.

"I don't see much point in that signal," said Katie.

"Well — the only point is — S for shoulders — two of them, so that's *S.S.* — and we're the S.S. or Sturdy Six," explained James. "So that makes the signal fit in with the badges — don't you see?"

"Oh — yes, I do see," said Katie, as James lightly and quickly touched his shoulders again, almost as if he were brushing away a little dust. "Yes — it's rather a clever signal — not very noticeable — but just right."

Everyone nodded, and James looked pleased. "Well, that shall be our signal," said Mark.

The six were once again in the hen-house in Mark's garden.

"Just a kind of recognition signal, like saying 'Hallo, secret comrade' which can be used from a distance. And I think we'll decide that if a signal is repeated *twice*, that means that something has happened, and the members must get in touch with one another at once."

"Oh, *good!*" said Katie, who really did love passwords and signals and all the rest of the Club customs. She touched her shoulders three or four times, as if signalling to someone urgently.

"Stop doing your gym exercises now, Katie," said Mark, and everyone laughed. "We'll get on to our next business. What shall this Club *do?* What shall be its aims? A Club is of no real use unless its members have some definite purpose."

"Let's do bird-watching down at the lake, for one thing," suggested Eric promptly.

Dick opened his mouth to say No, that was too dull — and then stayed silent. He remembered that Eric was lame, and couldn't go tree-climbing, or on long hikes — one of the Club's interests, at least, should be something *he* could do.

"A good idea, Eric," said Mark, at once. "We are all interested in birds and belong to the school's nature-club. We can do regular bird-watching, and write up what we see and hear for the School Nature Magazine — and we'll sign our article 'The Sturdy Six!' Any other suggestions?"

"Could we collect used postage stamps and tinfoil, and take them to the hospital?" asked Katie. "They sell them and buy toys for the children there. I know that Mollie and I already do this, but we'd get on much faster with our collections if we could *all* bring some to each meeting."

"Agreed!" cried everyone, and Mark looked at Katie. "You will be put in charge of that," he said to her. "Provide a bag for the silver paper or tinfoil, please, and a tin for the used stamps, and leave them here. We will bring what we have, each time there is a meeting —

and you and Katie will be responsible for taking the tin and the bag, when full, to the Secretary at the hospital."

"Yes, Mark," said both girls together. Ha — *now* they would soon get a good collection!

"And what about doing a play or something, and charging for the tickets?" said James. "You know the Head said the other day at Prayers that the school really must raise money to buy more books for the Class Libraries — and why shouldn't the Sturdy Six show what can be done?"

Everyone agreed in delight. "Yes! We'll do a show! We'll ask the Head if we can!" said Dick. "My word — we're going to be busy. But wouldn't it be better to do that at Christmas time?"

They discussed the matter thoroughly, and Mark looked at his Club members with approval. Who would have thought that at the second meeting the club would be going so strong — and that ideas would be pouring out, and everyone would be so eager and interested? He felt very pleased with the Sturdy Six!

He stopped the discussion at last, after having listened to everyone's suggestions.

"As far as I can gather, you are most of you in favour of a Christmas show," he said. "And it would certainly be something to do in the dark evenings next term. We'll put it to the vote. Hands up those who are in favour of doing the play now."

Not a hand went up! "Well, hands up for doing the play at Christmas," said Mark, grinning, and every hand shot up, of course! "That's decided, then," said Mark. "But couldn't we do something this summer, too — have a garden sale, or something?"

"Oh, *yes!*" said Katie and Mollie together. "A *jumble* sale would be wonderful," added Mollie. "Jumble sells like anything, and it's so easy to go round and ask people if they want to throw away antyhing, and if so, to give it to us instead, as we want to hold a sale in aid of — in aid of . . . well, what *shall* it be in aid

"Just this," said James and lightly touched his two shoulders, one with each hand.

of, because the *play* will be to get money for books for the Class Libraries. We shan't need any more money for that!"

"Ideas, please," said Mark, at once, and ideas came, of course!

"For the Sunshine Homes for Blind Children! For helping animals! For children in hospital! For buying a radio set for that poor blind old Mr. Sykes who sits at his window alone all day! For — for — for . . ."

"Enough," said Mark, putting up his hand. "You are full of good ideas! I don't see why we can't adopt *all* your ideas, and, when we've had the sale, and counted up the money we get, we could divide it between the things suggested."

"Yes! And if we raise any money on our own, that could go towards our ideas too," said Katie. "For instance, my father has promised me a shilling a week for keeping his bicycle clean. I'd willingly put that towards something."

"And I can take old Mrs. Lucy's two dogs out for a walk in the evenings, and earn *two* shillings a week," said Eric. "I can't walk very fast — but the dogs are old and fat and like ambling along."

"I can earn a shilling or two by doing the washing-up!" said Mollie.

"And I can earn *ten* shillings if I want to, by washing my uncle's car twice a week," said Dick proudly.

In fact, everyone knew how they could earn little or much, and they all became very excited in talking about it. Mark had to clap his hands loudly to get silence. "I shall really have to borrow my Dad's hammer," he said grinning, "and bang it on the floor for silence! This Club is about the liveliest in the country, I should think!"

"I never knew that discussing things like this all together, could be such fun," said Mollie, her face red with excitement. "Mark, I could walk to school and save my bus fare and . . ."

"Mollie, could you be silent for just one minute?" begged Mark. "ALL your ideas are good ones, and I can see that this is going to be a very alive Club indeed. But don't let us take on too much. One thing at a time! By all means let us earn money where we can, and save it for all kinds of things — but we'll have to have a Treasurer if we're going to deal with money! We want someone who will take the money, look after it, and keep an account of it. It's always best to have *one* person responsible for any money."

"I never knew that discussing things all together could be such fun," said Mollie.

"I vote Eric is Treasurer, then," cried Dick. "He's awfully good at figures — he's always top in maths."

"Yes. Yes, I think that's a *good* idea," said Mark. "Will you take on the post of Treasurer, Eric? We'll buy you a little account book — bring you any money at each meeting — and let you jot it down, and keep account of it, so that you can report to us at each meeting what is in our moneybox. We'll know then when we have enough to give money to some cause."

"Well — what with bird-watching — and collecting used postage stamps and tinfoil — and cleaning bikes — and doing the washing-up — and taking dogs for walks — and planning a Jumble Sale — and a show for Christmas — I really doubt if the Sturdy Six will have time to attend school," said Eric solemnly. "Certainly, I'll be Treasurer, Mark — I'll be proud to. I'll collect the money each time, jot it down, present the accounts, and keep the money safely at home locked in a drawer."

"I've an old money-box I don't use, with a key," said Katie. "I'll bring it to school and give it to you tomorrow, Eric."

"Right. Thanks," said Eric, who, of all the six, was the happiest — not because he could do all *they* could do — he couldn't, because of his crippled leg — but because they had chosen him to be one of them, and had given him a job of his own. He felt very proud and very happy.

The meeting came to a hilarious end, and Mollie ran up to the house for more mugs, and a jug of water for the orangeade. Her mother called to her.

"What a merry meeting you've had, Mollie!

I could hear your voices and your laughter from here! Do you want some biscuits to eat? I've a tin of home-made ones here for you."

"You're a pet, mother," said Mollie, pleased. "Oh, mother, our Club is *such* a good one! You've no idea what things we've been planning! And Mark is such a wonderful leader!"

"Well, so long as you follow out your ideas and really do something, I shall be proud of your club," said her mother. "But so many clubs begin well — and then just fade away."

"Not with a leader like Mark!" said Mollie, proudly. "You should see how he takes charge of our meetings, mother! And we've a Treasurer now, too — Eric!"

"My word — it's a *proper* club!" said her mother. "Well — if mere parents can ever be of any use to you, do tell me! I shall love to help if I can. Parents can be quite useful for such things as sales, and so on, you know!"

"Mother! How did you guess we meant to have a sale?" said Mollie, astonished.

"Oh, I couldn't help hearing one of you shouting out something about a Jumble Sale," said her mother, smiling. "Now, here are the biscuits. Run along with them."

Back went Mollie, and soon the Six were munching ginger biscuits, drinking orangeade, and sucking peppermints. Mark looked round at them all, and felt pleased.

"This is the kind of club to have," he thought. "Everyone friendly, full of ideas, and willing to work together. We can really DO things — not only bird-watching and things like that — but something even more worthwhile. I'm going to be proud of being leader of the Sturdy Six!"

You are, Mark! And your school is going to be proud of them too, and your friends are going to wish that *they* could wear those gay badges with S.S. embroidered in red!

Mollie ran up to the house for more mugs and a jug of water for the orangeade.

What will the Sturdy Six have done by the end of the year? How much money will they have earned? How many different birds will there be in their bird-watching books? How many used postage stamps, how much tinfoil will have been collected? Will old Mr. Sykes have his radio? Will their Jumble Sale go well — and their play bring the house down?

Well — what do *you* think? They are still going strong, and having meetings once a week — and Eric's account book shows a tremendous amount of figures!

It's such *fun* to have a Club! And now that *you* know how to start one from the very beginning, why don't *you* have fun, too?

The little daughter of Jairus

A LITTLE girl was watching for her father to come home. She lived at Capernaum, the town to which Jesus often came.

"Where are you, Anna?" called her mother. The dark-eyed, dark-haired child called back:

"I am waiting for my father. He will play with me when he comes."

Anna was twelve years old, an only child, and her parents loved her with all their hearts. She went everywhere with them, and they were very proud of her.

Each day when Jairus, her father, came home they played a game together. Anna always looked forward to that. Now she was watching for him as usual.

"Here he is!" she cried, and ran to meet the big man whose eyes and hair were so like hers. They played their game and the mother heard them laughing and talking happily in the evening sunshine. She smiled happily, too.

But none of them smiled the next day. Anna felt ill. "My head is hot," she said. "It hurts. I don't want anything to eat. I don't want to play."

Her father was suddenly anxious. "Wife, the child looks really ill," he said. "Put her to bed. I will send for the doctor."

So Anna was put to bed. She tossed restlessly from side to side. The doctor came and left her some medicine.

"She is no better," said the mother that evening. "I am afraid she is worse. We will send for the doctor again."

The doctor was alarmed when he came. "I will fetch another doctor," he said. "The child is very ill. Perhaps a second doctor can help."

But in a day or two it was plain that Anna was desperately ill, and her father was in despair.

"She is my only child," he thought, "my dear beloved little Anna. What can I do for her? The doctor can do nothing. I cannot let her die!"

He sat by the child's bedside and watched her. He looked at his anxious wife, pale and sad.

"Have you heard of this new healer, the man called Jesus?" he said suddenly. "I've been thinking about Him. I think He is here, in the town."

"Go and fetch Him," said his wife at once. "He might come and lay His hand on our child and make her well. Go now, Jairus, before it is too late."

"Go and fetch Him," said the wife at once.

"I will go and ask where I can find Him," said Jairus. "He is a good man and He loves little children. Surely He would come to our little Anna."

Jairus stroked his little girl's hair and went quietly out of the room. He made his way into the town and asked people anxiously where he could find Jesus. He went to the house where Jesus stayed — but alas, He was not there!

"Go down to the lakeside," said the woman who opened the door to him. "He may be preaching there."

So Jairus went down to the blue water, and there he saw a great crowd of people. "Surely Jesus must be here," he thought gladly.

He pressed through the crowd. "Is Jesus here?" he asked. "Where is He?"

"No, He is not here," said someone. "He was with us only last night, telling us stories from Peter's boat. Then He sailed off over the lake. A storm blew up when it was dark and we hope Jesus is safe. We are waiting for the boat to come back."

"Will He be long?" said Jairus, in despair. Nobody knew.

"You can only wait," said a woman nearby, sorry for this man who looked so sad. So Jairus stood with the people and waited, straining his eyes to see across the lake. He thought of Anna, lying so ill. Was she still alive? Every minute mattered now. If only Jesus would come!

"There's a boat now," said somebody, and Jairus sighed with relief. But it was not Peter's boat. It was someone else's. Jairus's heart sank.

After a little while somebody shouted: "I can see the boat. Look, over there! Jesus is coming!"

Peter's boat sailed swiftly over the lake. Jairus could see a man standing in it. Yes, it was Jesus himself. The boat ran into shore, and willing hands helped to pull it in. Jesus sprang to the beach, and the disciples tried to keep back the people crowding round Him.

Jesus did not land near Jairus, and he had to push through the crowd. "Let me through," he begged everyone. "Do let me through."

"Go down to the lakeside," said the woman who opened the door to him.

The crowd opened to let him pass. They saw that he had something urgent to say to Jesus. Jairus knelt down in front of Jesus and begged Him to come and see his little girl.

"She is at the point of death," said Jairus, his voice trembling. "I pray you, Lord, come and put your hands on her that she may be healed. Then she will live."

Jesus saw that Jairus was desperate. "I will come at once," He said. "Let us go."

Everyone had been listening to what Jairus had said. "He's going to see the little girl," they said to one another. "Little Anna, you know. He'll do something wonderful! We must go and see."

The crowd jostled and pressed around Jesus and the disciples as they went with Jairus. They were excited and every moment more and more people came to join them.

Now, in the crowd, there was a poor, miserable

woman. She was ill with a disease that no doctor seemed to be able to cure. For twelve years she had spent all her money on doctors, and now she was worse.

She had heard of Jesus, of course. "I would never dare to speak to Him, or ask Him to heal me," she thought. "But suppose, in the crowd, I came near enough just to touch the hem of His robe or even the tassel on His cloak — why, that would be enough to make me well again. He is so good and so kind — yes, just to touch His cloak would heal me!"

So, as Jesus was walking along with Jairus, this woman made her way nearer and nearer to Him in the crowd. At last she was just behind Him. With a beating heart she put out her hand and touched the bottom of His cloak.

No sooner had she touched it than she felt herself healed! Her body was no longer ill and weak. It was suddenly strong and healthy. The woman was overcome with joy and wonder. Now she must slip away quickly and think of the marvellous thing that had happened to her.

But before she could go Jesus stopped and looked round. "Who touched me?" He said.

"I didn't, Master," said one nearby. "Nor did I," said another. Peter was astonished at his Master's question.

"Master, what do you mean, *who touched you?*" said he. "Look at the crowd round you, jostling against you all the time! Many people must have touched you."

But Jesus knew quite well that someone had touched Him with a purpose, because He had felt goodness going out of Him as always happened when He healed someone. Some person had wanted His help, and had received it without even asking for it. Who was it?

The crowd jostled and pressed around Jesus.

Jairus did not want to stop. "Oh, hurry, hurry!" he thought. "There is so little time to be lost. My little Anna may be dying."

The woman in the crowd felt that Jesus was looking at her. She came forward and knelt down, trembling. She told Him of her disease.

"I knew that if I touched but the hem of your cloak I should be healed," she said. "And it was so."

Jairus suddenly saw the messengers pushing their way through the people.

"Daughter," said Jesus gently, "because you trusted me so much, you were healed. Go in peace."

As the woman was slipping through the crowd Jairus suddenly saw messengers pushing their way through the people. "Where is Jairus?" they asked. "We want Jairus."

Jairus felt his heart go cold, for the faces of the messengers were grave and sad. "Sir," said one, "do not trouble the Master now. Your little girl is dead."

Jairus turned in despair to Jesus, tears in his eyes. It was too late after all!

Jesus spoke comfortingly to him. "Don't be afraid. Only believe in me."

He walked on with Jairus, and the crowd fol-

lowed. When He came near the house Jesus turned and spoke to the people.

"Come no farther," He said. Then taking his disciples James and Peter and John with him, He went into the house with Jairus.

As soon as they were inside they heard a great noise of weeping and wailing and doleful singing and chanting. In those days when anyone died people were paid to come and wail for the dead, and already they were wailing for little Anna.

Jesus could not bear this noise. He knew that the people there had been paid to weep and wail, they were not weeping from their hearts for Anna. It was all make-believe, and Jesus did not like that.

"Why do you make this noise?" Jesus said to the weeping women. "The little girl is not dead. She is asleep."

Then they all laughed at Him, for they had seen that the child was dead. Jesus sent them all away, and then He followed Jairus into the room, where Anna lay. His disciples went with Him, and they walked softly to the bed where the child lay so still.

The mother was there, weeping bitterly.

"You were too late, Jairus," she sobbed. "You did not even say goodbye to her, our poor little Anna."

Jairus looked at her in despair, and then turned to Jesus. No one but Jesus could do anything now.

Jesus stood by the bed, looking at the child who lay so still, her eyes closed, and her cheeks pale. He put out His hand and took Anna's in His. He held it firmly in His warm one.

"Get up, darling," He said.

Anna opened her eyes. She sat up, looking all round. She was surprised to see so many men round her bed. She smiled at her father. Then she rose up from her bed and walked a few steps in the room.

Her mother and father could hardly believe their eyes. "Anna!" said her mother. "My little Anna!"

And in a moment she was in the arms of her father and mother. They kissed her and fondled her, crying for joy. She was alive again! She was laughing and talking just as she always did!

Jesus watched them with gladness. It was always good to see love and happiness and He was glad that He could bring so much.

"Tell no one of this," He said to Jairus. Then he turned to Anna's mother. She was quite beside herself with joy. Jesus knew that He must give her something to do for her child.

"Give Anna food to eat," He said, and the mother went gladly to bring some.

Jesus went from the house with His disciples, leaving behind a family full of joy.

"I want to see that man again," said Anna, to her parents. "He is kind. I like Him."

And so, when Jesus visited Capernaum, and the children came round Him as they always did, little Anna was always there, waiting. She listened to His stories, gazing up into his clear, steadfast eyes. She would do anything in the world for Jesus!

He put out His hand and took Anna's in His.

NEXT-DOOR JAMES

JIMMY had a fine bicycle, but next-door James hadn't. Sometimes his big sister let him ride hers, but he didn't like that much, because it wasn't a proper boy's bicycle. So he was always looking over the wall at Jimmy's bicycle, begging to have a little ride.

"No, you can't," said Jimmy. He didn't like sharing his things with anyone. "I'm not going to have it messed up by you."

"I wouldn't mess it up," said next-door James. "And anyway, I'd clean it after I'd had it."

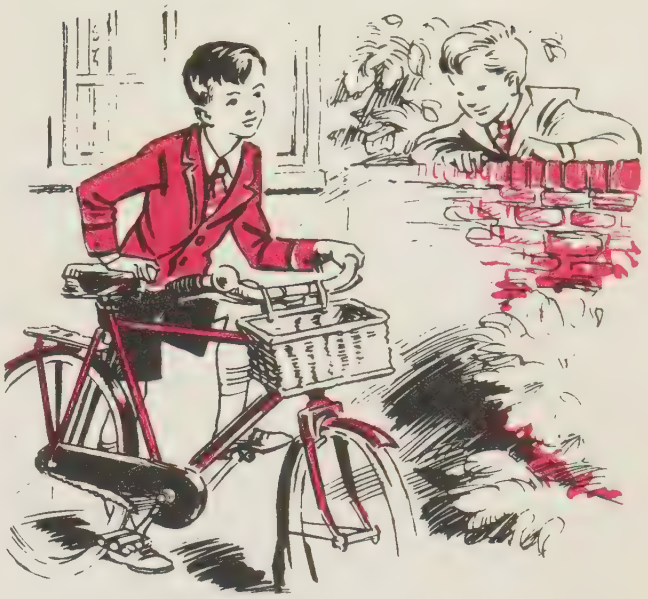
"Well, you can't have it," said Jimmy.

"You're selfish," said James. "You never let anyone share. You've never even let me have a kick at your new football."

James was right. Jimmy was selfish. He kept his sweets to himself. He wouldn't run errands for his mother unless she paid him. He wouldn't do anything he didn't really want to do.

One Saturday, when his father was home, he called to Jimmy. "Jimmy, old man — bike down to the paper shop for me, will you, and tell them my paper hasn't come."

"Good morning, Mr. Brown. Is there anything you want me to do?"



"I'm busy, Dad," called back Jimmy. "I'll go in a minute." But he forgot, of course.

Then his mother called him. "Jimmy! Are you there? Will you go and give a message to Granny for me, dear? And fetch the meat? I'm so busy today."

"Oh, Mother — so am I!" said Jimmy. "I'm just in the middle of something. You make me into an errand boy, you and Daddy."

Mother didn't say anything to that. She was hurt and shocked. What a thing to say! But his father had heard it, and he frowned. He went next door and asked for James. James came at once.

"Good morning, Mr. Brown. Is there anything you want me to do? I'm just going down to the village for my mother."

Mr. Brown looked at James. He had a very big basket indeed. "How are you going? On foot?" he asked.

"Yes. I haven't a bike like Jimmy," said James. "I wish I had! It wouldn't take me any time then to get down to the village and back!"

"I was wondering if you'd go a few errands for me and Mrs. Brown," said Mr. Brown. "I was going to suggest that you rode Jimmy's bike.

He has a big basket on the front and a good carrier at the back."

"Oh, sir — can I really ride it?" said James. "It's such a beauty! My word, I shall feel grand riding that. I've never had a ride on it yet. Do you think Jimmy will mind?"

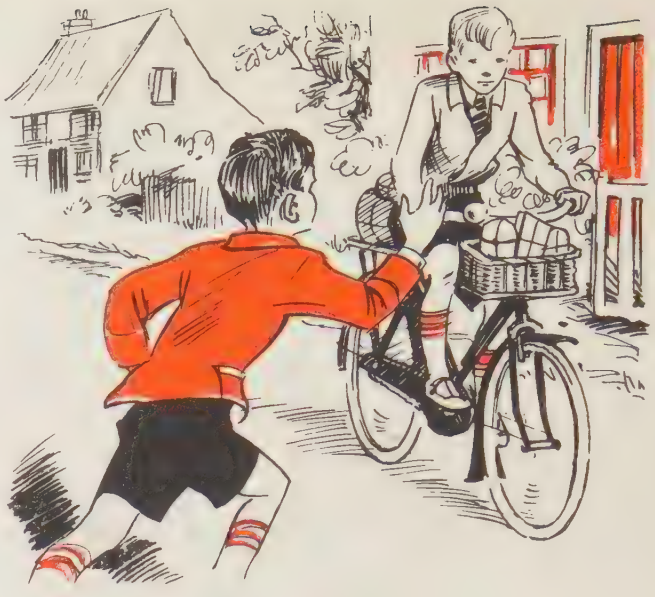
"It doesn't matter whether he does or not," said Mr. Brown. "I say you can take it, and I'm much obliged to you for being so ready to go. Look — here are the things we want done — there's a message for Jimmy's Granny — you know where she lives. And I want my newspaper, and here's Mrs. Brown's shopping list. Can you do all this?"

"Why, it's nothing!" said James. "I do much more for Mother. I can go to and fro several times to the village this morning, as I'm having Jimmy's bike. Thanks very much, sir."

Jimmy didn't see James come in and take his bike. He didn't see him ride away on it in the greatest delight. He didn't know that James was riding proudly down the village street, ringing the bell and feeling very grand indeed.

Now, it so happened that Jimmy suddenly remembered that he wanted to buy some sweets that day. He hadn't a single one left. He went

James rode away in the greatest delight.



"That's my bike! How dare you! I never said you could ride it. Get off at once!"

to fetch his bicycle — and it wasn't there! The shed was empty! Jimmy looked everywhere.

"Mother! My bike's gone?" shouted Jimmy. "And I wanted to go and fetch some sweets. Wherever can it be?"

Nobody answered. Jimmy ran to the front gate and looked out. Had he left his bicycle outside, by any chance?

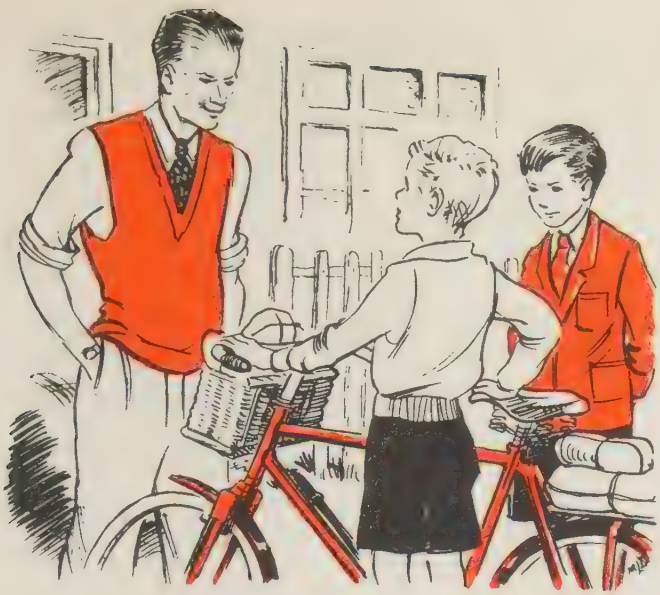
And then he suddenly saw James sailing up the street on his bicycle, ringing the bell loudly. He could hardly believe his eyes! He rushed out at once.

"That's my bike! How dare you! I never said you could ride it. Get off at once! I'll tell my father."

"He knows," grinned James. "He told me I could take it. He wanted all kinds of errands done and so did your mother, so he came and asked if I'd do them for him — and he said I could use your bike. My, it's a fine one — I've been three times down to the village and back on it already."

Jimmy snatched at his bike in a rage.

"You give it to me!" he shouted. "And don't you dare ride it again. I don't believe a word you say."



"I want a nice, cheerful, willing boy like you, James."

Then a stern voice spoke behind him.

"Jimmy! I told James to take your bike. I asked you to go an errand for me and you didn't. Your mother asked you, and you were rude to her. The only errand you meant to do was to fetch sweets for yourself."

It was Jimmy's father. Jimmy was most alarmed.

"Do you remember what you promised us when we gave you your bicycle, Jimmy?" said his father. "You promised you would always do our errands cheerfully and quickly. You haven't kept your bargain."

Jimmy went very red. He hated next-door James to hear all this.

"Well, we don't want you to do things for us if you can't bear to," went on his father. "So I have decided to ask James here if he'll run our errands on your bicycle. He's very willing to do so, and I'm sure he'll take care of your bicycle. Won't you, James?"

"Of course, sir," said James. "But — er — suppose Jimmy wants to do your errands, Mr. Brown?"

"He won't want to," said Mr. Brown. "He hasn't gone any messages or errands for us for weeks. There's no reason to think he'll change. Besides, I want a nice, cheerful, willing boy like you, James. It's a pleasure to ask you anything."

"You might give me a chance, Dad," said Jimmy, in a low voice.

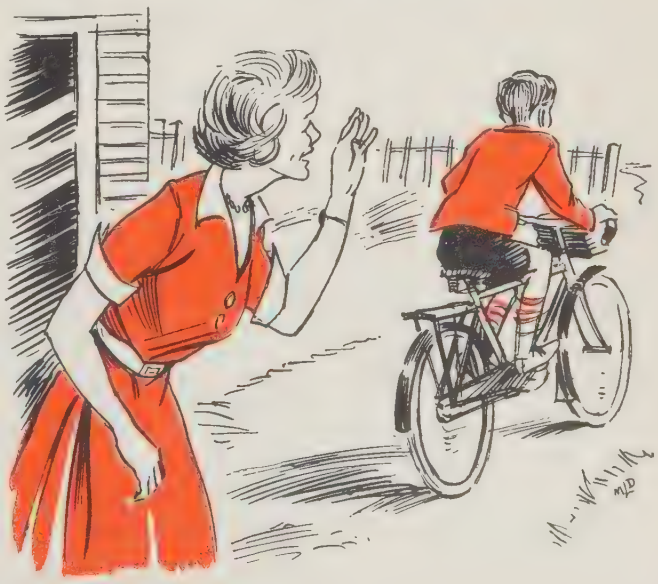
"Yes. Give him a chance, sir," said James. "It's his bike, after all. I know how he feels. I'll always do your errands for you if Jimmy won't. But I'd like him to have a chance."

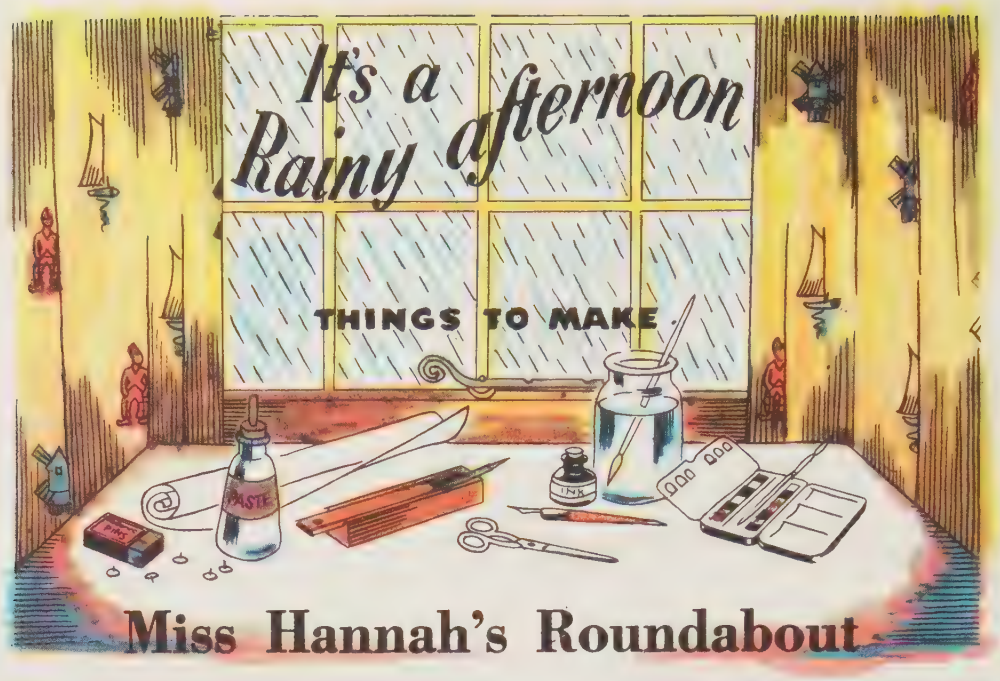
"Very well. Put the bike away now, James, and come in and have some chocolate cake and a drink of lemonade," said Mr. Brown.

He didn't ask Jimmy to come, and Jimmy didn't go with them. He suddenly felt ashamed of himself. To think that his father and mother had lent his bike to next-door James to go the errands he should have gone. He didn't like another boy helping his mother and father. Let next-door James run his own mother's errands!

Jimmy was given his chance. You should see him sailing away on his bicycle immediately his mother wants anything fetched. It really makes her smile. But she's pleased about another thing, too — Jimmy always lends his bicycle to James whenever he wants it. Quite right, too — after all, it was James who gave him his chance!

Jimmy sails away on his bicycle immediately his mother wants anything fetched.





Miss Hannah's Roundabout

Miss Hannah came into the playroom to look for the children. They were all there, gazing mournfully out of the window. They turned round when she came in.

"Miss Hannah! Isn't it maddening? We were going to sail boats on the stream and now the rain is absolutely *pouring* down."

"Yes, it's very tiresome," said Miss Hannah. "I felt sorry for you so I've come up to see if you'd like to make something this afternoon."

"Oh, *yes*! Something really exciting. Can you make absolutely *anything*, Miss Hannah?"

"Well," said Miss Hannah, "I think I can make most things. What do you want to make?"

"Er — let's think — oh, *I* know, a *roundabout*!" said Jack suddenly. "One that will really go round, a toy one. Can we make that, Miss Hannah?"

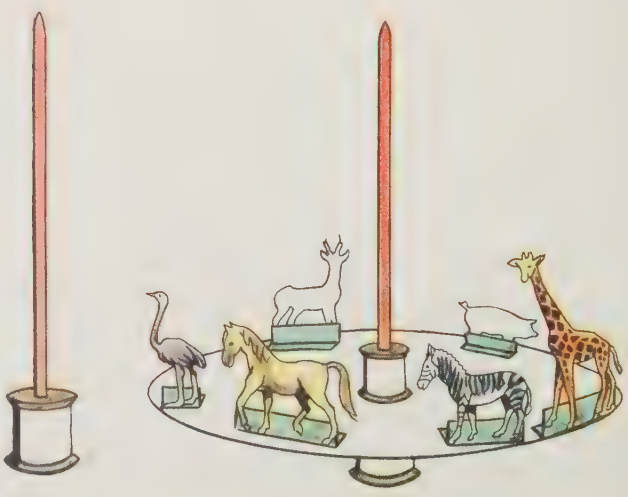
"Oh yes, I think so," said Miss Hannah. "We shall want some round pieces of cardboard, some cotton reels, and some wooden skewers. Go and ask Cook if she can let you have some skewers, Lucy. If not, we must make do with pieces of cane from the garden shed."

Lucy soon came back with a bunch of wooden meat skewers from the kitchen. Jane had found some small and large cotton reels. Jack had been sent to the odds-and-ends cupboard to see if he could find some round cardboard boxes. If not, they would have to cut circles from sheets of cardboard.

He found some old round chocolate boxes which Miss Hannah said would be "just the thing".

"Now," she said, "you can all do what I do. We will make a roundabout each. Take a large cotton reel — put your wooden skewer firmly into the hole in the reel. Now that's the middle post of our roundabout." *(See Fig. I.)*

Next she gave each child a round cardboard box. "Cut out a nice round platform about



twelve inches in diameter," she said. "A platform for your roundabout, I mean. You can make it from the bottom of the box. Perhaps the bottom will do as it is, once you have taken the sides from it."

Soon they each had circles of cardboard in front of them. "Now make a hole exactly in the middle of your circle," said Miss Hannah. "And slip it over the wooden skewer, till it fits on to the reel. That's right. Does it turn easily? No, yours is a little tight, Lucy. Make your hole a bit bigger."

Soon all the platforms were turning easily on the skewers. "Now take off your platforms again," said Miss Hannah, "because we must put animals on them to make the roundabout look real. We'll cut some out of books and paste them round the edge."

So they spent twenty minutes cutting out coloured animals from old books, and pasting them neatly round the edge of their "platforms"

"Now put your platforms back again on your skewers, right down to the reel," said Miss Hannah. "Aren't they beginning to look gay? Now take a smaller cotton reel and slip it down the skewer so that it holds and steadies the platform." *(See Fig. 2.)*

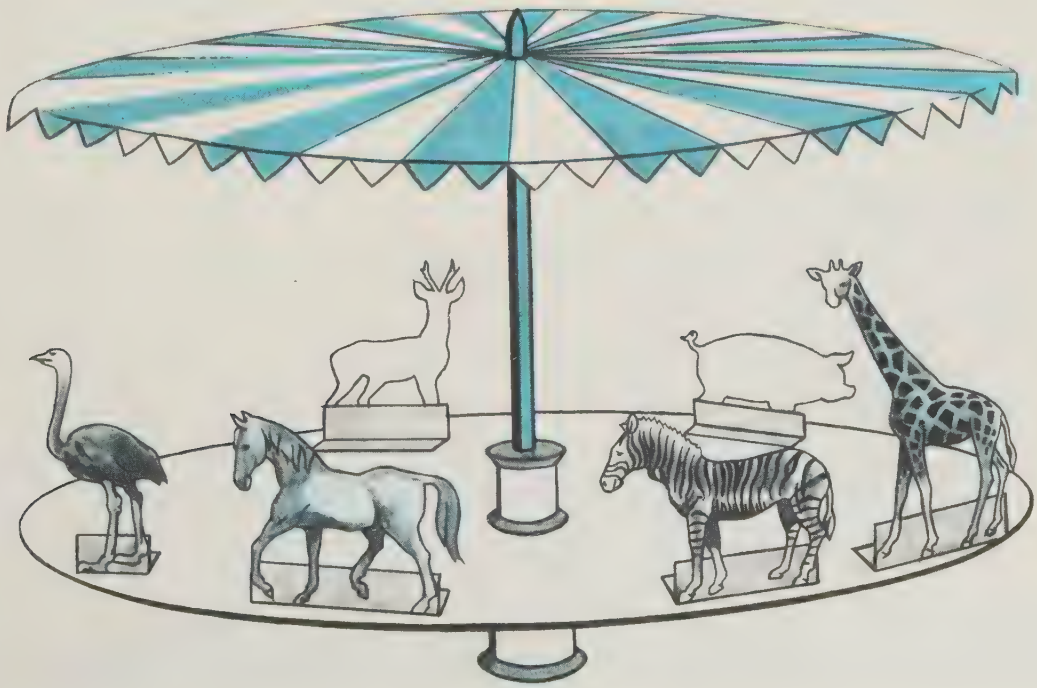
Soon all the "platforms" with their gay little roundabout animals were placed into position, with a second cotton reel above. "Now for the roundabout top," said Miss Hannah. "We can use the lid of a round chocolate box for that, but we must make it as gay as possible. Let's cut out a pretty edge to it and bend it downwards."

They decorated their roundabout tops as gaily as they could, and then cut out a pretty edging. "Now put your top on to the skewer," said Miss Hannah. "Make a hole first, of course. If it doesn't fit tightly we'll put a spot of glue to hold it fast."

Soon all the roundabout tops were on, and the roundabouts were finished. They looked really lovely! "Now make them go round," said Miss Hannah, and gave her platform a twirl with her fingers. Round and round it went, with the little animals spinning in a circle just like a real roundabout.

Jack, Jane and Lucy spun theirs, too. Then Jane fetched her little musical box and set it going whilst the roundabouts went gaily round.

"They look so *real*!" she said. "Oh, Miss Hannah, this is one of the nicest things we've made. Whoever would have thought it was so easy to make a roundabout!"



THE BRILLIANT LEAVES

"WELL," said Uncle Nat, as he met the children one fine October day, "what do you think of the country-side this morning?"

The two children gazed round. They saw the tree-covered hills and the hedges round the field, and, like Uncle Nat, they were filled with delight.

"Uncle, the trees aren't green — they're yellow and brown and red and pink and gold," said Mary. "Look at that wood over there — it looks as if someone had spilt a paintbox over it."

"We shall have a lovely walk today," said Uncle Nat. "We will go through the beechwoods, where the trees are the colour of golden sovereigns. Perhaps you have never seen a sovereign, but when you see the gold of the beech-leaves, you will know exactly what colour it is!"

There was colour everywhere that day. The creeper on the cottages was brilliant crimson. The birch-trees were a delicate yellow; the chestnut was golden, and so was the hazel.

"Uncle, soon the leaves will fall," said Mary sadly. "That's what all this brilliant beauty means — the fall of the leaf and winter-time."

"Don't look so gloomy," said Uncle Nat, amused. "Not every tree sheds its leaves. You will still have the yews and the firs, the pines and the holly. They keep their leaves all the winter through."

"Why do the leaves of some trees change colour?" said Peter. "It seems a queer idea."

"Does it," said Uncle Nat. "Well, when I tell you the reason, you will see that it is really a very *good* idea."

Mary picked up a brilliant pink leaf from a wild cherry tree. She held it up to the sun and it glowed like crimson fire. "Do tell me why this leaf is such a glorious colour," she said.

"Well," said Uncle Nat, "when the trees are about to cast away their leaves because they do not want them any longer this year, they collect all the rubbish they have and send it up to the leaves."

"What a queer idea! Why do they do that?" asked Mary in surprise.

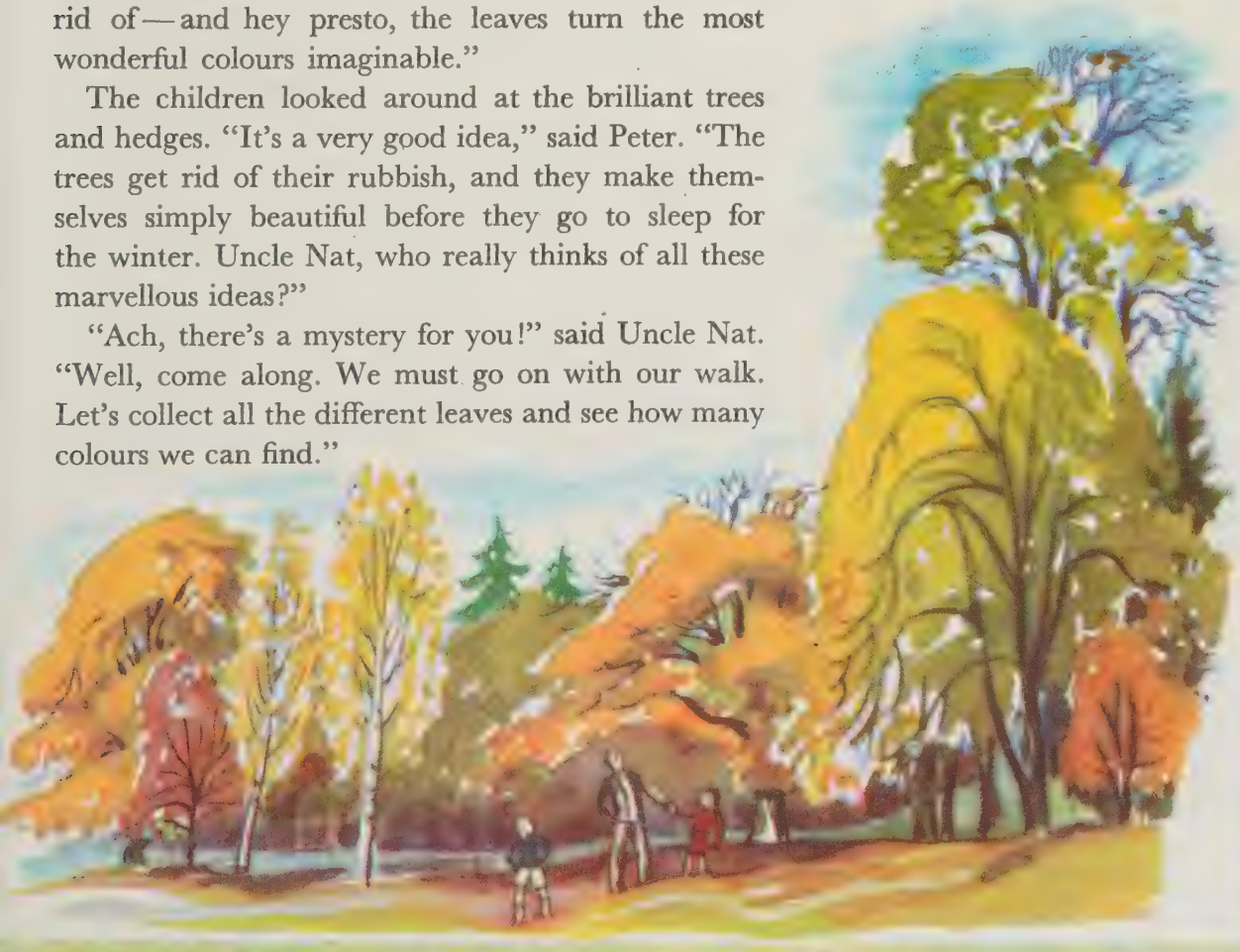
"They want to get rid of their rubbish," said Uncle Nat, "and that is a very sure way to do it. The leaves will fall off when the frosty nights come — and the rubbish will go with them."

"I see," said Mary. "Is it the rubbish that makes the leaves turn those lovely colours?"

"Yes," said Uncle Nat. "You see, plant rubbish is never green. Green is the *good* colour for plants; reds, yellows, browns and so on are the 'waste' colours. So up into the leaves goes all the stuff that the trees want to get rid of — and hey presto, the leaves turn the most wonderful colours imaginable."

The children looked around at the brilliant trees and hedges. "It's a very good idea," said Peter. "The trees get rid of their rubbish, and they make themselves simply beautiful before they go to sleep for the winter. Uncle Nat, who really thinks of all these marvellous ideas?"

"Ach, there's a mystery for you!" said Uncle Nat. "Well, come along. We must go on with our walk. Let's collect all the different leaves and see how many colours we can find."



The Whistler

This is a story from Enid Blyton's "Hedgerow Tales".

In the lovely month of May the hedgerow was beautiful to see. The hawthorn-leaves were a brilliant green, the brambles threw graceful branches into the air, full of tender young leaves, and the ivy shone dark and glossy. When the may blossom came it lay along the hedgerow like drifts of summer snow, and its fragrance brought a myriad bees, moths, butterflies and other insects to it. The hedgerow animals smelt it too, and rejoiced because it was a summer smell — a smell belonging to warm days and happy times.

The oak-tree was now full of leaf. It was the last of all the trees to put out its tender, feather-shaped leaves, and the birds whose nests were among its branches were glad of their shelter. They liked the soft green light that the leaves made, and they liked to see them waving in the wind. It was good to have a nest in the oak-tree in May.

On the bank below there were many flowers, glad of the hot sun. The cow-parsley foamed there, and in the wet ditch great clumps of golden kingcups raised their heads to the sun. Lilac milkmaids, the pretty cuckoo-flower, grew in the field and danced gaily all day long. Buttercups made a carpet of gold, and red clover raised its sweet head to the humming bees. All day long the cuckoo called, over and over again. It was a summer sound and the hedgerow folk liked it.

At sunset, when the buttercups glowed even more golden, and the shadow of the oak-tree was long, so long that it stretched half-way along the field, a strange sound was heard. It was a clear low whistle, rather bird-like. It came from the big pond that lay not far from the oak-tree. The hedgerow folk heard it, and knew what it was.

It was the otter whistling to his mate. She lived in the pond, for it was very deep in places, and big fish could be found there. It had once been part of a stream that had run into the river not far away, but the stream had been altered in its course so that it emptied itself into the river at a different place — and the big pond was all that was left of the old part of the stream.

In long ago days many otters had swum in the pond when it had been part of the stream, and even now, when it was only a pond, they came to it, travelling over the fields. It had the alder-trees they loved, and beneath the roots of the alders were fine hiding-places, holes where an otter could rest in peace, well hidden from all eyes. It was a good pond.

In the autumn before, two otters had come to the pond. The hedgerow knew them well, both in the water and out. The birds knew the least about them, for the otters were night-time creatures, and most birds sleep through the night. The owl knew them best, and sometimes hooted to them when he heard the otters whistling to each other.

The otters were dusky-brown creatures covered with dense fur — so thick that not a drop of water could wet their warm bodies. They were large creatures, about four feet long. The inquisitive hedgehog often sniffed at the "spur" or footprint left by the otters in the mud at the side of the pond. These prints showed the otters to have rounded toes, webbed for swimming, for they were marvellous swimmers.

Sometimes at sunset the late robin could see two flat black heads moving about on the pond surface. Then he knew that the otters were astir. He watched them swimming and playing, rolling their oily bodies round in a circle, as clever as fish in the water. They swam with their front paws only, and used their long flattened tails as rudders. It was wonderful to watch them.

The alder-trees knew the otters very well indeed, for had they not made their nursery under their roots? The alders sighed in the wind and

remembered. The mother otter had found the big hole one day and had whistled to her mate to come and look. To get to the hole under the roots they had to dive right into the water, and then scramble into the underground chamber as best they could. The hole led upwards, criss-crossed by alder-roots. At its top end it was dry and roomy.

"This will do for our nursery," said the otter to her mate. "No one will find us here. There will be plenty of room for all of us when the babies come. I shall bring rushes and grass here, and the purple flowers of the great reed, and make a soft nest."

And that winter, during a warm spell, the mother otter laid her three little ones there in the big, dark hole under the alders. They were quite blind, but they were already covered with a warm, downy fur. The mother was very proud of them and licked them all over. So did the father. They smelt sweet, those tiny otters, and were so warm and playful.

"You must go hunting for us," said the mother to her mate. "It is cold tonight, and I must not leave these little ones to get chilled. Go and bring us some fish. I am hungry."

The big otter slid into the water. He closed his short, rounded ears all the time he was under the surface so that no water should get into them. He went to the deepest part of the pond where he knew there were big fish, and very soon chased and caught one. Back he went to the hole.

The mother otter bit a large piece out of the fish's shoulder, and then ate the fish all the way down to the tail. This she left, for in the otter family it is not good manners to eat the tail. The tiny otters sniffed and snickered round the little bits of fish the mother had left. The smell excited them.

The alder-trees often felt the little otters scrambling about over their roots, and they liked it. And then one evening, when the sun had just gone down, leaving a golden glow in the western sky, the mother otter took her young ones into the pond for the first time. What an adventure for them!

They had often been to the edge of the water that lapped into their dark hole. One of them had even slipped into it, and had been pulled out by its mother, who scolded it and bit it sharply for a punishment. But this was the first time they had ever been out into the great world beyond their small, dark home under the alder-roots.

"Come!" said the otter to her three young

ones. She slid into the water and one by one the three small otters followed her. They did not feel the chill of the water, for by now they had thick, dense fur coats — two coats each, one of short fur and one of longer hairs.

At first they floundered about, not at all sure what to do in the water — but their mother was patient with them. She took them quickly up to the surface, for she knew they could not at first go very long without breathing. Then she showed them how to swim properly.

"Use your tail to guide you," she said. "Use your front paws for swimming. Let your back paws drag loose."

The young otters were clumsy at first, but

they enjoyed the adventure. What a fine place the world was! They watched their mother and father swim gracefully here and there, turning and tumbling easily through the water. They gazed in amazement as they saw a large fish chased and caught, and they snickered together in terror when they spied their mother chasing a startled moor-hen, which, taking to its wings, escaped just in time!

All through the spring-time the young otters learnt many things from their parents. They learnt how to turn over the big stones to hunt for crayfish. They found out how to twist and turn swiftly in the water to catch a darting fish. They were taken on land and found that they could run easily on their four webbed feet. They caught frogs for themselves, and grew fat and strong.

One night the father otter whistled good-bye to his mate. "The youngsters are big now," he said. "I am going away to the sea."

"Why is that?" asked his mate.

"This pond is drying up a little," answered the otter. "I am afraid that it may disappear altogether if the summer is hot. Even the river near by may dry up, and as I count on the current to take me down to the sea, I shall go whilst there is plenty of time. I shall spend the summer in an old sea-cave I know, where many bats live. In the autumn I will come back to you."

The big otter swam to the edge of the pond, shook the water from his thick coat like a dog and disappeared in the long grass. He had gone to the river. The robin, who loved the long twilit evenings of summer followed him, flitting along the hedgerow beside him. She saw him enter the swiftly flowing river, and, with front paws pressed under his chin, float gently down with the current.

His mate missed him sadly. The hedgerow folk often heard her whistling for him on these warm May evenings when the sunset glow lasted for a long time in the western skies. She wanted him to see what lusty fellows their cubs were now; she wanted him to swim and play with her on these sweet warm nights. But he had gone.

The weather grew hotter. The pond, never very full since a hot summer two years since, grew lower. The mother otter found that her underground chamber was now hardly under water. It would soon be no longer a safe hiding-place. She hunted round the pond for another. But there was none big enough for four otters.

"We must part," said the mother to her young ones. "You are old enough to go your own way now. You can fish and swim and dive, and you can walk for miles on the land if need be. You know how to avoid traps. I have taken you to the river and shown you how to let the current carry you along. You have often found holes big enough to hide in. Now the time has come for you to work for yourselves."

"But where will *you* go?" asked the smallest of the three.

"I may go down to the sea, too, as your father did," said the otter. "There are many things there to eat that we do not find inland."

"Is there fish there?" asked the biggest otter, hungrily.

"Shoals and shoals!" said his mother. "I shall come back in the late autumn, maybe to this very pond, and perhaps your father will come, too, to find me and play with me as he used to do. Ah, it is good to go up the rivers in the autumn! For then there are many eels coming down to the sea, and they are very good to eat!"

"Good-bye!" whistled the young otters, and they swam away from their mother. One went overland to the stream and swam along it. One went to the hole under the alder-roots and lay there, sorrowing to think that the happy family life was broken. And the third went to a marshy place he knew in a withy-bed two miles off. The mother otter swam once round the pond she knew so well, and then, whistling clearly, she left it and made her way to the river.

"I shall return in the autumn!" she called to the inquisitive robin. "Look for me then!"

The Humbug Adventure

Another tale of the Secret Seven

THE Secret Seven had a meeting one day after morning school.

"What about this invitation from old Professor Wills to go and look at the planet Jupiter tonight through his telescope?" asked Peter. "I don't know why he's picked on *us* to ask!"

"I've already seen it on television," said Colin. "There wasn't much to see either!"

"It'll be awfully boring," said Jack. "He's not a bit interesting. He just drones on and on. Let's not go."

"Well — wouldn't it be rude if we all left messages to say we weren't coming?" asked Janet. "After all — he means it kindly."

"It's going to rain," said Pam, looking up at the sky. "I bet it is. So we shan't see a thing if we do go!"

"If it rains, we won't go," said Peter. "So we'll just hope that it pours and pours!"

It didn't. The sky was certainly cloudy, but no rain came at all. The Seven sighed as they ate their tea in their different homes.

"Uthing ooing," he said.

She showed Peter how to train the telescope.

So they went, waiting for each other outside Professor Wills's house, which was called "Night Skies". That made them laugh.

The maid showed them into a study, and then went to fetch the old professor. She came back looking sorry.

"It's such a cloudy night that the professor didn't expect you," she said. "So he's gone out. But his wife says that if you are very, very careful, she will show you how to work the telescope and you can see if you can spy Jupiter for yourselves. Ah — here she comes."

Mrs. Wills was very nice. To begin with she produced a tin of most enormous humbugs to suck. Then she showed Peter and the others how to train the big telescope on to different points of the sky. "I know just about where the planet Jupiter is," she said, "and if you like I'll leave the telescope pointed at the place it should be, behind the clouds. Then when the clouds move on you may catch a glimpse of it now and then."

None of the Secret Seven could speak a word because of the big humbugs they were sucking. Peter made some polite noises, and hoped that Mrs. Wills understood. When she had gone out of the room, the Seven looked at each other in relief.

"Ooogle, eles-copy, oogle, urble, oopiter," said Peter. Nobody understood. He put his eye

to the end of the great tube and looked up.

"Uthing ooing," he said, which the others correctly understood as "Nothing doing." Jack worked his humbug round to the other side of his mouth.

"Urgle, onky, ooky ky," he said, meaning "Let's not look at the sky," but nobody understood a word! So he took his humbug out of his mouth and explained:

"Let's not bother about looking at the cloudy sky," he said clearly. "Let's bend the telescope down a bit and look at the village and the hills beyond and the farm — things like that. It would be fun to stand here, far away from them, and see them almost as if we could touch them!"

"Yes, let's," said Peter. "We know how to move the telescope. But for goodness sake be careful, it's jolly valuable."

The telescope had a curious window of its own to look through — a great window that reached from ceiling almost to ground, and had no glass in it at all. The telescope itself could be swung to almost any angle at a touch of the finger once a screw had been loosened.

"Let's look at the Village Hall," said Janet. "There's a dance on and it's all lit up."

She had taken her humbug out of her mouth to speak, and put it back again when she had finished. Peter was afraid of sticky fingermarks on the telescope, and he handed Colin a clean hanky to wipe where anyone touched.

The Village Hall looked so near that it might have been in the garden. Barbara took her sweet out of her mouth and giggled. "There's Mrs. Dickson, look, standing at the door. And do look, there's that silly boy Harry selling programmes or something."

This was a marvellous game! They moved the telescope into another direction, and saw where a Fair was, in the farmer's field about a quarter of a mile away.

"Goodness — it looks so near that I'm sure I heard that roundabout man sneeze!" said Janet. "And I can even see Dickie and Danny, paying their pennies to go on the roundabout!"

They spent a long time looking at the Fair, and began to wish they were there. "Urgle, ooble, oo," said Peter, forgetting to take out his humbug, but the others knew what he meant, because he was swinging the telescope slowly in a different direction. It was now pointing towards the dark farm. One window was brilliantly lighted and no curtains were drawn.

"There's nice Mrs. Wingfield knitting in her chair," said Barbara, taking her turn.

"And old Mr. Wingfield filling his pipe," said Colin. "I can even see what tobacco he's using!"

Little flames sprang up . . .

"You *can't,*" said everyone, mumbling through their humbugs. Then it was Jack's turn. He bent and looked through the great tube, seeing the farm itself and the barn nearby and a haystack. He suddenly gave a loud exclamation, and most unexpectedly swallowed his humbug. He gasped and choked, tried to call out something and pointed to the telescope. In astonishment, Peter looked through it. What was Jack fussing about?

He soon saw! Someone was moving near the haystack. Someone was striking matches! Little flames sprang up in the dry stack, and soon there were many more. Peter gasped, not taking

A minute later the police came up in a car.

any notice of poor, choking Jack. His eye was glued to the big telescope.

He squashed his humbug into his cheek in order to speak clearly. "Fire! There's a tramp firing Farmer Winfield's stack — and it's jolly near the old barn. Gosh, that's a big flame! Colin, go and ring up the farmer — at once! And, after that, the police. The stack will soon be burnt down, then the barn will catch!"

Colin ran to find the telephone in the hall. Peter had his eye glued to the telescope, watching everything. There was the man again, coming from behind the stack. He had probably fired the other side too! Peter could see him clearly — a small man — with a limp — and a beard that showed up well when he turned sideways to the flames. Janet tried to pull her brother away so that she could have a turn herself, but he wouldn't budge.

Colin telephoned to the farm and gave them a warning. Then he got on to the police. He ran back into the telescope room. "Peter, I've 'phoned! What's happening now?"

Peter was having a wonderful view of all the sudden excitement at the farm. The farm-door was flung open, and out ran the farmer and his son. His wife followed with buckets. A minute later the police came up in a car. The firemen, called by the police, arrived too. What a to-do! Peter gasped and exclaimed, and the others could hardly contain themselves!

"Let's have a look, Peter! Peter, you selfish thing, let *us* have a turn. What's happening?"

Peter told them. "Everyone's arrived — the stack's blazing, but the barn is safe. The firemen are drenching the stack now — and goodness, they've caught the man. No it's not him. The man who fired the stack was small and had a beard and a limp. They've got the wrong man — no wonder he's struggling!"

This was too much for the others. They raced

Miss Nan

Miss
Nan
Nockabout
Wouldn't wash her face,
And everybody said it was
A real
Dis-
Grace!

Mud,
Soot.
And marmalade,
Smeared her cheeks and chin,
And nobody would guess she had
A pretty
White
Skin.

But one
Day
The chimney-sweep
Knocked at Nancy's door,

out of the room together. "We're going to the farm! It's too thrilling for words!"

So along to the farm they went, and managed to see the end of the excitement. Half the stack was saved — the barn was not touched — and a man was trying to get away from two stout policemen.

"I didn't fire it, I tell you!" he was shouting. Jack went up to the Sergeant.

"Sir — I don't think that man did do it," he said. "The man you want has a limp — he's small — and has a beard."

They managed to see the end of the excitement.

"Why — that would be Jamey!" cried the farmer's wife. "We sent him off last week for stealing."

The police let the other man go. The Sergeant ordered them to go to Jamey's cottage, not far off. Then he turned to Jack.

"Now perhaps you'll tell us how you know all this, you kids?" he said with his large smile. "You warned the farmer — called the police — and even know who the man is who fired the stack! You're the Secret Seven, aren't you?

"We saw it all through Professor Wills's telescope," said Jack. "Peter's still back there, watching."

But he wasn't. As soon as he saw the others through the telescope, appearing in the midst of the excitement, he wanted to be with them — and he ran at top speed, sucking the very last of his humbug!

"Good work," said the Sergeant, when Peter told the whole of the story. "You saw something more exciting than the planet Jupiter, didn't you? Ah — you never know what you're going to see through telescopes."

"It was a jolly good adventure, but a very sudden and short one," said Colin.

"Yes," said Peter. "It only lasted as long as my humbug. An adventure *couldn't* very well be shorter than that!"

"Short and sweet — like the humbug," said Janet with a giggle. "Let's call it the Humbug Adventure — it's a jolly good name for it!"

So it is — don't you agree?

Nockabout

And said, "Oh, little maid, you are
The one
I
Adore!"

"PLEASE
Say
You'll marry me,
Your face is just like mine,
We'll be a pair of chimney-sweeps,
I think
T'would
Be fine!"

But Miss
Nan
Nockabout,
Screamed and ran away,
And ordered twenty pounds of soap
That very
Same
Day!

A PUZZLE POEM

(Find the right names of all the sleepers.)

I am a Slurriqe,
I sleep in a tree,
Curled up in my tail
As cosy can be.

I am a Doghegeh,
In ditches I creep,
Find a warm hole there
And roll up to sleep!

I am a Gorf,
And soundly I sleep
Upside down in the pond
Where the water is deep.

I am a Tab,
When the winter wind blows
I sleep in a barn
Hung up by my toes!

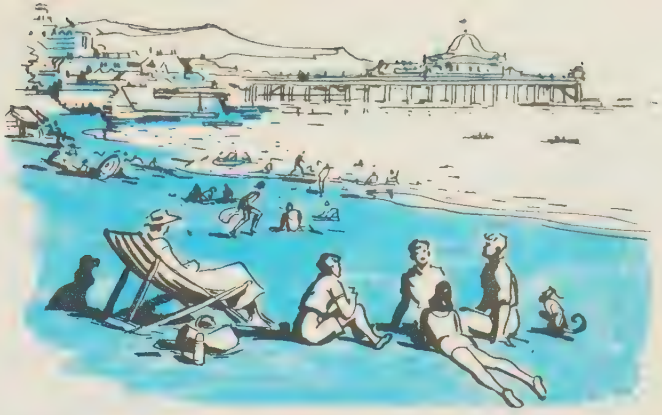
I am a Neque Paws,
And snugly I hide
Under the ivy-leaves
On the house-side.

I am a Dota,
And I like to crawl
Beneath a damp stone
Or under a wall.

And I am a Tribba,
Who all winter through
Is just as awake
And as lively as you!

Loony the Spaniel

Another extract from a Barney Books seaside story, The Rubadub Mystery.



AFTER the first few days the holidays began to slip away fast, as holidays always do.

A week had gone by before any of the children realised it. It had been a good week — bathing, boating, paddling, walking, and messing about with Barney the spaniel and Miranda. Loony had enjoyed himself too.

He dug violently each morning, covering every one with sand. He then ran into the sea and got thoroughly wet. Then he came back and shook himself really vigorously, showering every one with drops of sea water.

He had also developed a new and most irritating habit. Having been smacked hard for attempting to bring brushes, towels and mats on to the beach, he cast about for something that nobody could possibly object to.

He brought along a strange dog each day to play with him! The first time he brought a peculiar-looking mongrel with very short legs and a large head.

"Look at that," said Snubby. "Poor creature. If its legs were much shorter they wouldn't touch the ground!"

"Ha ha — very old joke," said Diana. All the same, it *is* a peculiar dog."

"It's a bit of a smelly dog," said Roger, as the dog sat down heavily on his legs. "Get off, Smelly! Go away!"

But Smelly had no intention of leaving his good friend Loony. They went crazy together and nearly drove Miss Pepper mad as they tore round and round her deck-chair. They had to put up with Smelly all day, and were amazed to see Loony sharing all his tit-bits with him.

The next day Loony trotted off the beach and returned with a second friend — a bulldog with a face a bit like Mr. Tubby's. He wasn't as bad as Smelly, and he liked to sit as near everyone as possible.

"I wish you wouldn't *dribble* all over me," Snubby said to the bulldog. "You want a bib or something. Miss Pepper, do bulldogs always dribble or is this one just doing it on purpose?"

"He's dribbled over me too," said Diana. "I remember a teacher at school who had a bulldog and he dribbled as well. Loony, next time you bring a friend, bring one who doesn't smell *or* dribble!"

The bulldog was very sweet-tempered until he took a fancy to a bone that Loony was gnawing. Then he gave out such blood-curdling growls that even Snubby drew back. Miranda was with them at the time and she leapt to the top of Barney's head in fright.

"Go away," said Miss Pepper firmly to the bulldog. "That's Loony's bone. Go away!"

The bulldog calmly picked up the bone and waddled off. Snubby gave Loony a poke with his foot.

"Coward dog! Couldn't keep his own bone!"

Loony hung his head. He crept off the beach when no one was looking. He returned looking quite a different dog, bright and cheerful, accompanied by three small dogs of the terrier type, all very alert and inquisitive.

"Oh, stop it, Loony! Have you gone potty?" said Snubby, surveying the four dogs in disgust. "What do you want to go and pick up half the town for? Shoo! Clear off, all of you. No, not you, Loony. You're going to be tied up to Miss Pepper's deck-chair for the rest of the day."

"Oh no, *indeed* he's not," said Miss Pepper at once. "You did that two days ago and he got up much too suddenly and made my chair collapse. If he s going to be tied to anything, you can tie him to your foot, Snubby!"

TRACKS IN THE SNOW

"THE snow is still thick on the ground," said Uncle Nat. "What about going ou and doing a little detective work?"

"Oooh — I should like that," said Peter. "But what exactly do you mean?"

"I mean we'll go out and see if we can tell by the tracks in the snow who has been about last night and this morning," said Uncle Nat. "No — I don't mean burglars, so don't hope for that. I mean animals and birds."

They went out. The snow lay thick and white—but the surface had plenty of marks.

"Now, look," said Uncle Nat. "Those are bird-tracks — what kind of a bird went just there, Peter?"

"I should think a sparrow — or a chaffinch," said Peter. "The prints are in little pairs, which makes me think they have been made by a bird that hops, two feet together, like a sparrow."

"Good boy," said Uncle Nat. "Now what about *these* marks?"

"Well, I should think those were made by a bird that can *run*, like a blackbird," said Mary, "and these must have been made by a duck from the frozen-up pond. I can see the marks made by the web between his toes."

"Very good," said Uncle Nat, really pleased. "Now, here again are two sets of prints — animal prints this time.

One is a dog's, and the other a cat's. Can you say which is which?"

Mary couldn't, but Peter did. "I know," he said. "This must be the cat's because there are no claw-marks showing — and this must be the dog's because there are. I know our cat draws in her claws when she walks — so they wouldn't show in her prints, would they?"

"Quite right," said Uncle Nat. "Top marks. Now this print here, in the road. What made that?"

"Horse!" said both children at once.

"And this one?" said Uncle Nat, showing them another track, inside the field-gate.

"That's the mark of a hoof too — but a hoof split in half," said Peter, puzzled. "Of course — a cow. It has a cloven hoof, hasn't it, Uncle?"

"Right," said Uncle Nat. "Now look at all these marks, heaps of them together — more hoof-marks. What animals made them?"

"Rather like the cow — cloven — but much smaller," said Mary. "Sheep! The sheep went along here, Uncle Nat, a whole flock of them."

They found a rabbit's prints, and they even found a fox's, which was very like that of the dog, except that here and there the mark of his brush showed where it had sometimes touched the snow.

"Have we been good Snow Detectives?" asked Mary.

"Excellent!" said Uncle Nat. "I'm glad I'm not a burglar. I'm sure you would both track me down at once!"

(Can you *do some snow-tracking?)*

Just a spot of bother!

Larry, Fatty, Daisy, Pip and Bets — and, of course, Buster the Scottie — meet again Mr. Goon, the village policeman, and this time solve just a small mystery!

1. MR. GOON IS A NUISANCE.

"LET'S go down to Fatty's house and see if he'll come for a walk," said Larry to Daisy. "It's a gorgeous day — much too good to spend indoors!"

"All right," said Daisy, putting down her book. "Shall we get Pip and Bets too?"

"We'll call for them on the way," said Larry, and went to find his mother. "Mother — we're going for a walk. We'll be back for dinner."

They went to Pip's house and found him and Bets cleaning out the garden shed. "We're off to Fatty's," said Larry. "Things seem a bit boring today — perhaps Fatty will liven them up! Something usually happens when he's around."

Fatty opened the door, grinning. "Hullo! I thought it must be you four".

"Oh, good — we'll come too!" said Bets. "I'm tired of this dirty old shed. Mother told us to clean it out, but we can easily finish it when we come back. Do I look too dirty to come out for a walk?"

"You do rather," said Daisy, and brushed down her dress. The dust flew out in a cloud! "There — that's better. There's a black mark on your cheek, too. Got a hanky? Here, use mine."

They set off together, the four of them, and soon arrived at Fatty's house. They whistled, but there was no reply.

"Must be down in his shed," said Larry, and they made their way down to the bottom of the garden, where Fatty's shed was hidden among the close-growing shrubs and trees. Buster the Scottie was in the shed with Fatty, and he barked loudly and joyfully as he heard their footsteps.

"Wuff! Wuff-wuff-wuff!"

Fatty opened the door, grinning. "Hallo! I thought it must be you four, judging by Buster's delighted yaps. What's up? Anything exciting?"

"Not a thing, Fatty," said Larry. "These holidays are pretty boring. It's a super day — what about a walk? We can take old Buster too; he looks as if he wants some of his fat taken off!"

"Wuff," said Buster, quite agreeing. He was always ready for a walk!

"Well, let's go then," said Fatty, shutting his shed door and locking it. "I feel bored, too. Nothing exciting has happened these hols, and we've only a week left. I haven't even seen our enemy!"

"Who? Oh, that fat policeman, Mr. Goon!" said Bets. "He's been *very* busy, Mother says, going round and warning people about their dogs."

"Their *dogs*? Why, what's the matter with our dogs, all of a sudden?" said Fatty, surprised. "Buster, do you hear that? You'd better be careful!"

The van braked suddenly, and Goon fell off his bicycle in fright. Buster leapt on him in delight.

"Well, the farmers have been complaining that dogs are chasing their sheep, and worrying the lambs," said Bets. "So Goon's been warning everyone not to let their dogs wander."

"Well, Buster's far too scared of big old mother sheep to chase them," said Fatty, "He tried it once, and the sheep ran after him, baaing like mad. I never saw Buster run so fast in my life!"

They went down the road, Buster running in front, his tail wagging fast. A large figure in dark blue suddenly swung round the corner on a bicycle, ringing the bell violently. Buster gave a joyful bark, and leapt at the front wheel.

"Clear orf, you!" said a familiar voice, and a foot kicked out at Buster. The bicycle wobbled, and Fatty called to Buster.

"Heel, Buster! Heel, I say! Sorry, Mr. Goon. You came round the corner so quickly that you startled old Buster."

"That pest of a dog!" said the big policeman, and jumped off his bicycle. "I was just coming to warn you to keep him locked up. The farmers are complaining of dogs worrying their sheep — and I warn you, if I see a loose dog I'm going to have a few words with the owner!"

"Buster's not loose, he's with *us*," said Fatty. "Anyway, he doesn't wander about by himself."

"You just put him on a lead," commanded Mr. Goon.

"I haven't one with me," said Fatty, and walked on with the others. Buster ran back and growled, and Goon hastily mounted his bicycle again, kicking out at the little dog. That was too much for Buster and he sprang at Goon's ankles in delight. The big policeman rode a few feet down the road, still kicking out at Buster, and didn't see a small van coming out of the drive of a house. Fatty gave a loud yell.

"Look out! Mind that van!"

The van braked suddenly, and Goon fell off his bicycle in fright. Buster leapt on him in delight, and Fatty had to rush to pull him off. The van drove round Goon and went off in a hurry. Goon was much too angry with Buster to take any notice of it!

Bets picked Buster up and ran down the road with him, scared that Goon might arrest him and take him away! The others helped poor Goon to his feet, and Fatty dusted him down well.

"That van almost ran over you," he said, trying to distract Goon's anger from Buster to the van. "Coming out of the drive at top speed like that! Not even slowing down or hooting! Might have killed you, Mr. Goon! Did you take his number?"

"No. No, I didn't," said Goon, putting his helmet straight. "Where's that dog? I'll — I'll . . ."

But the others walked on quickly, and left Goon to mount his bicycle again, muttering angrily to himself. It was only when Fatty and the others had turned the corner that something struck Fatty as strange, and he stopped.

"I say — what was that van doing coming out of that drive? The people belonging to the house there are all away — and the house is locked up!"

"Oh, well — it was probably some delivery van — they wouldn't be able to make anyone hear, anyway," said Pip. "Come on, for goodness' sake, or Goon will catch us up!"

2. COME ON, PUSS!

The five children dodged down a little side-turning, and waited till they saw Goon sailing by, purple in the face. "Thank goodness he's gone," said Bets, who was scared of the big, loud-voiced policeman. "Let's go down this lane, then we shan't meet him again."

"Right," said Fatty. "It leads down to the river. We'll walk along by the water."

So down to the river they went, and sauntered by the rippling water, which was very blue that sunny morning. Buster ran along happily until he came to the boat-house, and then went to find his friend, Tom the boatman.

"Hallo, Buster," said Tom. "Where's your master? Oh, there you are, Master Frederick — do you want a boat this morning?"

"Well — it might be fun to pull across the river and go to the primrose woods on the other side," said Fatty. "I bet there are millions there this lovely spring day."

"Well, you can take the Saucy Belle, " said Tom. The five children got in with Buster, who at once ran to the prow, and stood there like a small figure-head. He loved a boat!

They rowed across the river, and landed on the opposite side. They tied up the boat and then made their way to the woods upon the hill. On the way up they passed a big empty house, called 'River-View', with a 'To Be Sold' notice-board beside the gate.

"I say — look at all the daffodils in the front garden here," said Daisy, standing at the gate. "Did you ever see such a sight!"

"Let's go down the path and look at them," said Bets. "My word — if this house was in a town, people would be sure to pick these daffies if they saw the house was empty and to be sold!"

But no one had touched the hundreds of yellow, dancing daffodils, and the five children stood and admired them. Buster couldn't think why they stood and stared at such boring things

They rode across the river, and landed on the opposite side.

as flowers! He ran off to explore the garden by himself. He disturbed a cat asleep on a window-sill in the sun, and it yowled in fright when it saw Buster barking below the sill.

Buster leapt at it, and the cat sprang right over his head, and ran to a tree. It was up it in a trice, Buster barking madly at the foot, clawing at the trunk in excitement.

The five children ran to see what was the matter. "Buster! You *know* you're forbidden to chase cats!" cried Bets. "Oh, look, Fatty, the poor thing's gone right up to the top of the tree!"

"Well — I hope to goodness it can get down," said Fatty. "Let's go — and perhaps it will come down by itself when it sees that we've gone and have taken Buster with us."

So they all trooped out of the front gate, taking one last look at the hundreds of yellow daffodils lining the drive under the trees. Bets turned to watch for the cat to come down the tree, but she couldn't see a sign of it.

"Can we come and see if it's still up the tree, on our way back?" she asked Fatty. "It wasn't a very big cat — not much more than a kitten. It might not know how to climb down a great tree like that."

"Yes. We'll come back and have a look, Bets," said Fatty, smiling. "Buster's a fathead. He knows quite well that he can't catch cats or rabbits, but he always *will* chase them! Come on — we'll go primrosing in the woods now."

There were millions of primroses in the woods on the hill, and the five of them gathered enormous bunches to take home. Then they turned to go back to the river.

"Don't forget, we must look up the tree to see if the cat is still there," said Bets, and Fatty nodded. They went in at the drive gates of the big, empty house again, past the 'To Be Sold' notice, and walked by the daffodils. They came to the big tree up which the cat had gone.

They all peered up it, Buster too. "Not a sign of the cat," said Fatty. "It must have come down, Bets. Come on — we'd better go."

The cat was up in the tree in a trice.

But just as they turned to go a sound reached their ears. "Mee-ow! Mee-ow!"

"That's the cat!" said Daisy. "Where is it? That was a frightened meeow, I know it was."

They looked up the tree once more — and then, quite suddenly, Pip caught sight of the cat.

"Look! There it is! Up on the roof of the house, by that chimney!" he said. "See where that tree-branch reaches out to the roof? It must have run along that, and jumped on to the roof. Now it's scared and can't get down."

"I'd better go up and get it," said Fatty, at once. But Larry leapt up to the lowest bough, and swung himself into the tree before anyone else. He was a fine climber, and was soon at the top. He called coaxingly to the cat.

"Puss! Come on, Puss! Come here to me and I'll take you down. Puss, puss!"

"Mee-ow," said the cat, and didn't move. It sat on the roof beside a skylight, near to a chimney, and looked as if it meant to stay there all day!

Larry slid along the branch to the roof, and

THE LITTLE GOOSEBERRY MAN

He stood beside the cabbage tops, not half as high as they,
A cheeky little ragamuffin sprite,
His toes were peeping through his shoes, his hair was all astray.
His wings were torn — but, oh, his eyes were bright!

"Now tell me, little man," I said, "what work have you to do?
"It's said that fairy folk do many things:
"Perhaps you polish buttercups, or maybe all night through
"You grow the toadstools round in fairy rings?

"Perhaps the dandelion clocks by you are daily wound,
"Or tell me—are they only just a sham?"
"I don't know," said the ragged sprite, and gave a merry bound,
"I put the whiskers on the gooseberries, ma'am!"

Bets held her breath as she saw him climb from the branch to the tiled roof itself.

"Be careful, Larry, old thing," called Fatty, worried. But Larry was used to climbing, and was not at all afraid. He was on the roof now,

Larry was used to climbing and was not at all afraid.

climbing slowly towards the cat. "Puss!" he said. "Come on, then!" He was now beside the skylight, and the cat only three feet away. He stretched out his arm — and the cat, scared, leapt down the roof, ran to the tree-branch, and half-climbed, half-fell down the tree! It leapt on to a wall and disappeared.

But Larry didn't come down! He sat beside the skylight, peering down into the attic below, looking astonished.

"What's up, Larry? Come on down!" called Faty impatiently. "Do buck up!"

3. CARPETS! HOW PECULIAR!

Larry gave a shout. "All right! I'm coming! Blow that cat — making me climb all the way up like this. It simply shot down the tree, didn't it?"

He slid down the roof and climbed quickly down the tree. Daisy and Bets were most relieved to see him standing safely beside them. "I was awfully afraid for you," said Bets. "You looked so high up on that roof."

"I saw something a bit queer when I looked down through the skylight there, into a sort of attic below," said Larry. "It was full of rolls of carpets! Do you suppose the people forgot to take them with them?"

"*Carpets!*" said Fatty, astonished. "What do you mean? Wasn't there any old furniture there as well — or boxes — the sort of rubbish you find in an attic?"

"No, *nothing* but carpets," said Larry. "Good-looking ones, too — the kind they call *Persian* carpets. My Granny has one in her hall, and she says it's very valuable."

"I expect the people who are selling the house have stored them there till they sell it," said Daisy. "It would save them storage fees. It costs a lot to pay storage on valuable things, you know."

"Well — if they take long to sell the house, the moths will certainly get at the carpets!" said Larry. "Fatty, do you think we'd better tell the house-agents about those carpets? I mean — if they *have* been left behind by mistake, when the people left the house, it would be a shame for them to be ruined by moths."

"Right. We'll call at the house-agent's this afternoon," said Fatty. "We shan't have time now. We'll have to buck up, because we're all pretty late. Buster, it's *your* fault! Chasing a cat like that!"

"Woof," said Buster, mournfully, afraid that Fatty was cross with him. They hurried down to to the boat, and rowed across the river at top speed. Soon they were running home, all but

"Carpets!" said Fatty, astonished. "What do you mean?"

Fatty completely forgetting about the curious sight that Larry had seen through the skylight.

Fatty thought about it as he ate his lunch, sitting opposite his mother. "Whatever are you thinking about so deeply?" asked his mother, at last, tired of sitting in silence.

"Persian carpets," said Fatty.

"Good gracious! But why think so deeply about *them?*" asked his mother, astonished.

"They're very valuable, aren't they?" said Fatty. "They oughtn't to be left in an empty house, ought they?"

"Of course not," said his mother, even more astonished. "Nobody in their senses would do such a thing. Moths could completely ruin them

in no time. What carpets are you thinking of?"

"Oh — just some that Larry was telling me about," said Fatty hastily, afraid that his mother would ask him questions he would find awkward to answer.

"Dear me — I didn't know Larry was so interested in carpets," said his mother. "What carpets are these?"

Fatty changed the subject. "That reminds me," he said. "Have you an old bit of carpet I could have to put down in my shed, mother?"

His mother at once forgot about Fatty's interest in Persian carpets, and for the rest of the meal talked at great length about the old rugs she could spare. Fatty was most astonished to hear of so many!

After the meal he remembered that he and the others were to go to the house-agent's to find out about the house on the hill across the river. Once he could discover who the owners were he could write to them — or telephone — and solve the mystery of the carpets. But probably it wasn't a mystery at all!

He was just going to get his bicycle when Buster began barking loudly, as someone came cycling in at the front gate. "It's Goon!" said Fatty surprised. "Now what does *he* want? Surely he hasn't come about Buster's behaviour this morning. Blow him!"

Buster began barking loudly, as someone came cycling in at the front gate.

He went out to meet Goon, anxious that his mother should not hear the big policeman complaining. Goon dismounted from his bicycle and roared at Buster.

"Now you clear orf, you pest of a dog! You wait till I catch *you* after the sheep! That'll be the end of you!"

Fatty felt angry. Why did Goon always have to shout and make himself so unpleasant? He called Buster to him, and made him sit down at his feet.

"What is it now, Mr. Goon?" he said, coldly. "Please don't shout. My mother may be having a rest."

"I've a good mind to send you in a bill for having my suit cleaned," said Mr. Goon. "Look what I did when that dog made me fall off my bike this morning." He showed Fatty a dirty mark all down his coat-sleeve.

"It was that van driving out so suddenly that made you fall," said Fatty. "Not Buster."

"Yes — and I want to ask you something about that too," said Goon, still blustering. "Did you notice the car's number?"

"No. Did you?" asked Fatty. "I saw the name on the side though. But what's all the fuss about? What's wrong with the van? Do you want to prosecute the driver for rushing out of the gate like that?"

"Ha — so you saw the name on the van, did you?" said Mr. Goon. "You just tell me what it was, then!"

"You tell me why, first," said Fatty.

"Well, I want to arrest that driver," said Goon importantly. "He and his pal went to that house, knowing its owners are away, forced the door — and went off with all the carpets! And what's more, it's the third time they've done such a thing! So you tell me the name on that van, see?"

Fatty gave a sudden laugh. "It was the baker's van," he said. "I'm afraid you're on the wrong

track, Mr. Goon. Our baker wouldn't steal *carpets*. Carpets! Well, that's very, very interesting!"

4. A NICE BIT OF DETECTIVE WORK

The big policeman stared at Fatty in disbelief. "It wasn't the baker's van!" he said. "That wasn't the baker driving it. I saw the driver, and it *wasn't* the baker!"

"I agree with you," said Fatty. "The thief probably just took the van. I expect he borrows a different one each time he steals carpets, when he hears that people are away for the day, or longer!"

"Yesterday, he went to Lady Burnet's," said Goon. "She'd left two maids there — and the driver told them he was from the cleaner's and had come to take the carpets for cleaning — and they let him have them! He used the *cleaner's* van that time — took it from in front of the shop, bold as you please — and it was found down by the river! Empty!"

Fatty was thinking very, very fast. Should he tell Goon what he knew, or not? Should he tell him of the carpets hidden in the attic of the house across the river? Perhaps he had better . . .

But he changed his mind when he heard the policeman's next words. "If that dog of yours hadn't gone for me this morning, I'd have been able to challenge the driver of that van, and arrest him, and get back the carpets, and . . ." he began.

"You wouldn't," said Fatty. "You didn't even know that the van had been borrowed by the thief."

"I'd have guessed it all, if that dog of yours hadn't gone for me!" said Goon. "That dog's as bad as you are, always interfering with the law!"

"That's enough, Mr. Goon," said Fatty. "I might have told you a few useful things if you'd been polite — but as it is, I'll get in touch with Superintendent Jenks as soon as I can put him on to the carpet thief. I know where the carpets are — and I *think* I know how to get

"That dog's as bad as you are, always interfering with the law!"

hold of the thief. Good afternoon, Mr. Goon!"

And with that Fatty turned his back, and walked down to his shed with Buster pattering at his heels. Mr. Goon stared after him in rage.

"I don't believe a word of it!" he shouted. "Not a word! Why, you didn't even know about the carpets till I told you!"

Fatty didn't reply. He was wondering whether to get hold of his friend, the Superintendent of Police, at once. No — perhaps not. He would look pretty foolish if those carpets that Larry had seen up in that attic were *not* the stolen ones! He would do as he had planned and go to see the house-agent. He rode off on his bicycle within the next ten minutes, and met the others as he had arranged.

"Daisy, you come with me into the agent's," he said. "I'm not going to ask for the keys or anything — only for the address of the people who want to sell the house."

So in they went, and Fatty said "Good afternoon" politely to the young girl there, sitting at

a desk. "Could you please tell me the address of the people who want to sell 'River-View' up on the hill over the river?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said. "But someone is buying it, I think. They have had the keys for a week, and they telephoned today to say they would like them for one more day, as they had *almost* made up their minds to buy the place. So it's not much use my giving you the address of the owners."

"Thank you," said Fatty, and walked out with Daisy, thinking very hard. "They've already had the keys for a week!" he said, "and want them for one more day. That means they are probably going to clear out those carpets tonight. What a nerve they've got! Borrowing other people's vans — walking into houses when they know the owners are away, and taking all the carpets — and then storing them up where no one would ever *dream* of looking for them — in an empty house that's up for sale, and to which they've even got the keys!"

"How do they get the carpets there?" asked Daisy. "Would they go across the river by boat — or take them by car over the bridge?"

"That's a point!" said Fatty, thinking about it. "*Not* by the bridge, I think, in case the borrowed vans were seen. So that only leaves the river. They must have a boat somewhere in a creek — a covered punt, probably — and punt across at night. Look, shall we take a stroll by the river and see if we can spot some likely boat?"

Everyone agreed that it would be a very good idea, so away by the river they all went, Buster too. It wasn't long before they found what they were looking for!

"Look — there's a house-boat!" said Pip, pointing down to a little, hidden creek. "And a small boat beside it! Do you think the thieves would choose a house-boat for stuffing the stolen carpets into, and then use the little row-boat at night to ferry them all across?"

"Yes — I believe you're right, Pip!" said Fatty. "If you *are* right, then we ought to find some carpets in this house-boat, waiting for tonight's removal by boat!"

They slid down into the creek, and tried to peer in at the windows of the house-boat. It was called Rockabye, and was a very small one. Its windows had curtains pulled tightly across. Not a thing could be seen inside the boat, which, of course, was strongly padlocked.

They tried to peer in at the windows of the houseboat.

"No go," said Pip, disappointed. "Can't see a thing!"

"Wait a bit!" said Larry suddenly. "Look — what do you reckon this is?"

He was pointing down to the railings that ran round the house-boat's small deck. Everyone looked, and Daisy gave a little cry. "Carpet threads! They must have dragged the carpets over the railings, and one got caught on that nail, and left that little tuft of threads. That *proves* we're right!"

They climbed up to the river-bank again, excited. Pip pointed to the field behind. "Car-wheel marks!" he said. "Look, they must have come down that lane yonder, through that gate, and over the field to the river. It's so deserted here that it would be a hundred to one chance if anyone saw them!"

"We'd better get on to the Superintendent at once," said Fatty, delighted. "Come on — we'll rush back home, and I'll phone. My word — this is just about the quickest mystery we've ever solved!"

5. QUITE A LOT HAPPENS!

The five, with Buster at their heels, just as excited as they were, cycled back quickly to the town. Fatty went to telephone from the post-office — but to his bitter disappointment the Superintendent was not in.

"He won't be back till tonight, sir," said the clerk who answered. "If it's anything important I suggest that you report it to Mr. Goon."

That idea didn't appeal to Fatty and the others at all. They debated what to do. "There's not much time to be lost," said Fatty, considering the matter. "I believe the thieves will probably clear off after stealing this last lot of carpets. They said they wanted the keys only till tomorrow, you remember! They'll take today's haul of carpets out of that house-boat tonight and ferry them across the river in that little row-boat, collect the whole lot out of that attic Larry saw, and probably load them into a removal van — another 'borrowed' one — and that will be the last anyone ever hears of them!"

"Well, we certainly can't stop them by ourselves," said Larry soberly. "We'll simply *have* to tell Goon."

So, very much against their will, the five of them cycled down to the police station after tea that evening, with Buster running beside them. Goon was extremely surprised to see them.

"We've come to put our cards on the table," said Fatty.

"What do you want?" he said roughly. "Come to tell me a cock-and-bull story again about where the stolen carpets are? Well, I warn you, you won't bamboozle *me!*"

"We don't want to bamboozle you," said Fatty, in the polite voice that irritated the policeman so much. "We've come to put our cards on the table. We know where the stolen carpets are — we know how they're taken there — and we know that unless you go there this evening, you'll probably be too late!"

"I'm surprised you don't tell all this to the Superintendent instead of me," said Goon, suspiciously. "It's not like you to come to *me!*

I'll take a pinch of salt with all you say, see?"

"Very well," said Fatty, annoyed. "Here is our information. Take it or leave it. The last lot of carpets are hidden in the house-boat called Rockabye, away up the river. They will be rowed across the water tonight, and taken up the hill to a house called 'River-View'. There are dozens more stolen carpets there, probably all valuable, stuffed into the attic. They will probably all be removed tonight, or at the latest, tomorrow."

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Goon. "Not a word! Nobody could know all that! You want to send me on a wild goose chase, just like you've done before! AND I happen to know something that proves you're wrong!"

"What's that?" asked Fatty, surprised.

"*There's nobody living at 'River-View'*" said Goon, triumphantly. "You chose the wrong house to send me to, Mr. Clever — an empty one. Now just you clear out, all of you — and I'll be reporting this silly nonsense to the Superintendent tonight. My word, you'll get a proper ticking-off, you see if you don't."

Bets looked scared. Fatty hustled them all out, afraid that he was going to lose his temper. Well — he had done his best. Now he must wait and telephone to the Superintendent later on, and hope that it would not be too late!

But Mr. Goon managed to get in first, and the Superintendent listened to him in amazement. "But why should that boy, Frederick, pull your leg?" he asked Goon. "It seems to me there may be something in his tale. I'll ring him myself."

And he did — and listened with very much interest to what Fatty had to say! "Goon didn't believe a word, sir," said Fatty. "But I'm sure we're right! Can you send some men up to 'River-View' before it's too late? I wouldn't be surprised if they're going to remove everything tonight."

"I'll send my men up there, don't you worry," promised the Superintendent. "But you keep out of it tonight, Frederick."

Fatty grinned and put back the receiver. *He* wasn't going to keep out of it — or Larry or Pip either! He wouldn't let the girls go, but he and the others would.

And so, about eight o'clock that night, when it was getting dark, the three boys rowed across the river, and then made their way up

To his horror, a strong hand gripped his arm.

to 'River-View'. Aha! What was this in the drive, close to the side-door? A small removal van! Fatty pushed Larry and Pip into the bushes, and hoped that the Superintendent's men would come in time.

To his horror, a strong hand gripped his arm from out of the bush behind him. Fatty froze into stillness. Were the thieves hiding there, then?

A voice hissed in his ear. "I told you to keep out of it!"

Gosh! It was the Superintendent himself, waiting in hiding with six other men! Fatty grinned in delight. And now, who on earth was

this, coming down the drive, clomping along on heavy feet?

"It's Goon!" whispered Larry in his ear. "He thought he'd better come along, after all, to make sure you were *wrong*, Fatty! Hallo — *now* what's happening?"

Plenty seemed to happen all at once! Three men suddenly appeared at the side-door, carrying bundles of carpets, standing in the light of a lamp in the passage behind them. Goon challenged them with a shout.

"Hey, you! What are you doing?"

In a trice the men had dropped their bundles, and leapt at Goon. He went down with a yell, and was promptly heaved into the removal van, with carpets loaded on top of him. Fatty could hear his smothered, furious shouts. A chuckle came from behind him. It was the Superintendent, highly amused.

"Goon has found out that you spoke the truth to him, Frederick," he whispered. "Now, keep back here in the bushes, please. We're going out after the men!"

He blew his whistle sharply, and Fatty jumped. Then, in a crowd, the Superintendent and his men bore swiftly down on the amazed thieves. There were shouts and blows — but it was all over very quickly indeed — far too quickly for the three boys! In no time at all, the three men were locked inside their own removal van, and driven swiftly away to the police station. The Superintendent clapped Fatty on the back.

"A neat little job, Frederick, wasn't it?" he said. "Thanks to you! Another hour and we'd have been too late. Can I give you a lift home? Our police car is under some trees, a little way down the road."

"Well — perhaps you'd better take poor Mr. Goon instead," said Fatty, generously. "He can't feel too good after being shoved into that van and having carpets thrown all over him. He's sitting down on the gravel path over there, groaning like anything."

"His feelings are hurt more than his body," said the Superintendent, hard-heartedly. "If he really didn't believe what you so kindly told him, he shouldn't have come along here tonight. Well — perhaps I'd better give him a lift. Goon — get up. We'll take you back in our car."

"No, thanks, sir," said Goon, staggering up. He had no wish to talk to the Superintendent just then. Why, oh why, hadn't he believed the fat boy when he had told him that very peculiar-sounding story? "I've got this house to go through and lock up, sir," he said, "and then

Three men suddenly appeared at the side-door.

I must get in touch with the owners. There's plenty to do! You take those boys instead."

So, very gleefully, Fatty, Larry and Pip rode proudly back in the big, black police car. "Another mystery solved, eh, Frederick?" said the Superintendent.

"Oh, this really wasn't much of a mystery, sir," said Fatty, modestly. "Let's call it Just a Spot of Bother!"

"WHO wants to go twigging?" said Uncle Nat.

"What's twigging?" asked Mary.

"Finding out how many twigs you know," said Uncle Nat. "We'll bring a whole lot home and see if you can name them. Anyone who knows them can have sixpence. Anyone knowing less than six can give *me* sixpence!"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know six," said Mary. "Still, I'll try. We'll collect the twigs from trees and bring them home to name them."

So they all set off. They broke little twigs, set with buds, from most of the trees they came to. Mary looked at them. She thought she only knew about two.

"Twigs look much the same on the trees, but they are different when you look at them closely, in a bunch like this," she said. "There are black buds and red buds, brown ones, sharp ones and blunt ones, and even sticky ones."

"I believe I know quite a lot," said Peter. "Haven't we enough, Uncle Nat? Do you know them all?"

"Of course," said Uncle Nat. "But then I've had many more years to use my eyes than you have."

"I know lots of people older than you who have seen trees every single day of their lives and don't know which is an oak and which is an ash; I mean to know them all soon," said Mary.

The twigs were arranged in a vase. "Now," said Uncle Nat, "as long as you know six common ones I shall be pleased. That is a good beginning. You can add others as the days go on."

"We *both* know this one," said Mary, and took from the vase a fat, brown twig with very sticky buds. "It's the horse-chestnut. Its buds are always sticky."

"One," said Uncle Nat. "Next, please,"

"We know this one too," said Peter, and pulled out a slender twig, set with long thin buds so sharp that they pricked. "It's a beech twig. The buds are always very long and sharp and pointed."

"Two," said Uncle Nat. "Next one?"

"Well, we know this one because it has a green catkin on it," said Mary. "It's a hazel twig."

"Three," said Uncle Nat. "Another one?"

"We know this one, because it has hard, very black buds," said Peter, and he pulled a grey, sturdy twig from the vase. "It's an ash twig. Its buds are always black."

"Good," said Uncle Nat. "Four. Which is the fifth?"

"We know the oak," said Mary, and she took out an untidy-looking twig, set with clusters of buds of all sizes. "The oak buds are always set higgledy-piggledy anywhere on the twig."

"And the sixth?" said Uncle Nat, rattling the money in his pocket.

That was a puzzler. The children stared at the twigs. Did they know any more?

"Yes," said Peter. "Look — a lime-tree twig, Mary. Don't you remember, it has red buds. We can tell it by that."

"Well done," said Uncle Nat. "Sixpence for each of you. You've begun your twigging quite well!"

(Do you know six common twigs? See if you can find the ones in this story.)

A little Aquarium

JOHN could not keep a proper aquarium because he hadn't enough money to buy one. So Uncle Merry gave him a very big glass pickle-jar, wide for its height.

"Here you are," he said. "You can make a dear little aquarium with this, John. We'll go and get some things for it this afternoon, shall we?"

"Oh yes," said John. "I want a real little pond in my jar, Uncle — with sand at the bottom and pebbles, and pond weed and snails and beetles and everything — oh, and tadpoles, of course!"

"You can't have *everything*," said Uncle Merry. "For two reasons. One is that your jar would be too crowded and the creatures would die. The other is that you must only keep creatures that do not eat one another. If you have one of the fierce water-beetles, for instance, it would gobble up your tadpoles!"

"Oh dear!" said John. "I shouldn't like that. What could I have in my little pickle-jar pond, Uncle?"

"Well, tadpoles and snails would be all right," said Uncle Merry. "And one or two caddis-grubs if we can find them. I'll put some string around the neck of the pickle-jar and we'll take it with us to fill it with pond-water. Pond creatures do not thrive very well in tap-water."

Off they went together to the pond. John had a net with him and caught at least twenty tadpoles, which he wanted to put into his jar. But Uncle Merry said "no" very firmly.

"Six or seven is quite enough. That's right — look at them swimming round the jar, John! Now for some water-snails."

They found three beauties, and Uncle Merry managed to get two caddis-grubs too, in their funny hard cases. He pulled up some water-weed, and put that into the jar as well.

"Now back home we go!" he said. "You will have a dear little pickle-jar pond now, John!"

When they reached home, Uncle Merry carefully emptied everything out of the jar into a pail for a while. Then he and John put a layer of clean, washed sand at the bottom of the jar. Then John went to hunt for some tiny pebbles, which he washed under the running tap. Those went on top of the sand. Then Uncle Merry tied stones on to the bottom of the water-weed stems, to keep them upright in the water.

"Now for the water," he said. "We must pour it carefully back into the jar. John, put a piece of brown paper over the sand, will you — cut it into a rough circle — that's right — then the water will not disturb the sand and make the jar cloudy as I pour it in."

The water was poured gently into the jar, and all the little creatures went with it. The water-weed arose upright when the circle of wet paper was fished out of the jar. The tadpoles wriggled madly, and the snails began to crawl up the side. The caddis-grubs explored the bottom of their funny little pond.

"Oh, isn't it lovely!" said John. "Pat! Janet! Look at my pond! Isn't it fine?"

Janet and Pat at once wanted ponds like John.

"I'll show you how to make your ponds," said John proudly. "I know exactly how to, don't I, Uncle Merry?"

"I hope so," said Uncle Merry. "Remember to put a cupful of pond-water, or water from your greenhouse tank or rain-barrel into your 'pond' every week."

FIRE-EATING AND OTHER THINGS!

An extract from FIVE HAVE A WONDERFUL TIME, a story about the Famous Five — Julian, Dick, George, Anne and Timmy the Dog, and their caravan holiday among the Fair Folk.

A BIG figure loomed up in the twilight. It was Alfredo, the fire-eater. "Jo! Are you there?" he said. "Your aunt invites you to supper — and all your friends too. Come along."

"Thanks," said Julian. "We'd be pleased to come. Do you mean now?"

"That would be nice," said Alfredo, with a little bow. "I fire-eat for you? Anything you say!"

This was too tempting to resist. Everyone got up at once and followed the big Alfredo over the hillside to his caravan. Outside there was a really good fire, and on it was a big black pot that gave out a wonderful smell.

"Supper is not quite ready," said Alfredo. The five children were relieved. After their big tea they didn't feel ready even for a meal that smelt as good as the one in the pot! They sat down near it.

"Will you really eat fire for us?" asked Anne. "How do you do it?"

"Ah, very difficult!" said Alfredo. "I do it only if you promise me not to try it by yourselves. You would not like blisters all over your mouth inside, would you?"

Everyone felt certain that they wouldn't. "I don't want you to have blisters in *your* mouth, either," added Anne.

Alfredo looked shocked. "I am a very good fire-eater," he assured her. "No good ones ever make blisters in their mouths. Now — you sit still and I will fetch my torch and eat fire for you."

Someone else sat down beside them. It was Bufflo. He grinned at them. Skippy came and sat down too. Then the snake-man arrived, and he sat down on the opposite side of the fire.

Alfredo came back carrying a few things in his hands. "Quite a family circle!" he said. "Now watch — I will eat fire for you!"

Alfredo sat down on the grass, some way back from the fire. He set a little metal bowl in front of him, that smelt of petrol. He held up two things to show the children.

"His torches," said Mrs. Alfredo, proudly.

Alfredo called out something to the snake-man, dipping his two torches into the bowl. They were not alight yet, and to the children they looked like very large buttonhooks, with a wad of wool caught in the hook-part.

The snake-man leaned forward and took a burning twig out of the fire. With a deft throw he pitched it right into the metal bowl. Immediately it set light to the petrol there, and flames shot up in the darkness.

Alfredo had held his torches out of the way, but now he thrust first one and then another into the burning petrol in the bowl.

They flared alight at once, and red flames shot up as he held one in each hand. His eyes gleamed in the brilliant light, and the five children sat still, spellbound.

Then Alfredo leaned back his head — back and back — and opened wide his great mouth. He put one of the lighted torches into it, and

closed his mouth over it, so that his cheeks glowed a strange and unbelievable red from the flames inside his mouth. Anne gave a little scream and George gasped. The two boys held their breath. Only Jo watched unconcerned.

Alfredo opened his mouth, and flames rushed out of it, gushing like a fiery waterfall. What with the other torch flaring in his left hand, the burning petrol in the bowl, the torch in his right hand and the flames from his mouth, it really was an extraordinary scene!

He did the same with the other torch, and once more his cheeks glowed like lamps. Then fire came from his mouth again, and was blown this way and that by the night breeze.

Alfredo closed his mouth. He swallowed. Then he looked round, opened his mouth to show that he no longer had any flames there, and smiled.

"Ah — did you like to see me eat fire?" he said, and put out his torches.

"It's marvellous," said Julian, with great admiration. "But don't you burn your mouth?"

"What, me? No, never!" laughed Alfredo. "At first maybe, yes — when I began years and years ago. But now, no. It would be a shameful thing to burn my mouth."

"But — how is it you *don't* burn your mouth?" asked Dick, puzzled.

Alfredo refused to give any explanation. That was part of the mystery of his act and he wasn't going to give it away.

"*I* can fire-eat too," announced Jo, casually and most unexpectedly. "Here, Uncle, let me have one of your torches."

"You! You will do nothing of the sort!" roared Alfredo. "Do you want to burn to bits?"

"No. And I shan't either," said Jo. "I've watched you and I know just how it's done. I've tried it."

"Fibber!" said George at once.

"Now you listen to me," began Alfredo again. "If you fire-eat I will whip you till you beg me for mercy. I will . . ."

"Now, Fredo," said his wife, "you'll do nothing of the sort. *I'll* deal with Jo if she starts any nonsense here. As for fire-eating — well, if there's to be anyone else fire-eating here, *I* will do it, I, your wife."

Then Alfredo opened his great mouth wide.

"You will *not* fire-eat," said Alfredo obstinately, evidently afraid that his hot-tempered little wife might try to do it.

Anne suddenly gave a scream of fright. A long, thick body glided between her and Julian — one of the snake-man's pythons! He had brought one with him, and the children hadn't known. Jo caught hold of it and held on for dear life.

"Let him be," said the snake-man. "He will come back to me. He wants a run."

"Let me hold him for a bit," begged Jo. "He feels so smooth and cold. I like snakes."

Julian put out his hand gingerly and touched the great snake. It did feel unexpectedly smooth, and quite cool. How extraordinary! It *looked* so scaly and rough.

The snake slithered all the way up Jo and then began to pour itself down her back. "Now don't you let him get his tail round you," warned

the snake-man. "I've told you that before. He'll squeeze you till you yell."

"I'll wear him round my neck," said Jo, and proceeded to pull at the snake's long body until in the end he hung round her neck like a fur. George watched in unwilling admiration. Anne had removed herself as far from Jo as possible. The boys gazed in astonishment, and felt a new respect for the little gypsy girl.

Someone struck up a soft melody on a guitar. It was Skippy, Buffo's wife. She hummed a sad little song that had a gay chorus in which most of the fair folk joined.

It was exciting sitting there round the glowing fire, listening to the thrum of the guitar, and the sound of Skippy's low, clear voice — sitting near a fire-eater too, and within arm's length of a snake who also seemed to be enjoying the music! He swayed about in time to the chorus, and then suddenly poured himself all down Jo's front and glided like magic to his master, the snake-man.

"Ah, my beauty," said the funny little man, and let the python slide between his hands, its coils pulsing powerfully as it went. "You like the music, my beauty?"

"He really *loves* his snake," whispered Anne to George. "How can he?"

Alfredo's wife got up. "It is time to go," she told the audience. "Alfredo needs his supper. Is it not so, my big bad man?"

The snake hung round Jo's neck like a fur.

Alfredo agreed that it was so. He placed the heavy iron pot over the glowing fire again, and in a few seconds such a glorious smell came from it that all the five children began to snif expectantly.

"Where's Timmy?" said George, suddenly.

"He crept away with his tail down when he saw the snake," said Jo. "I saw him go. Timmy come back! It's all right! Timmy, Timmy!"

"*I'll* call him, thank you," said George. "He's *my* dog. Timmy!"

Timmy came, his tail still down. George fondled him and so did Jo. He licked them both in turn. George tried to drag him away from Jo. She didn't like Timmy to show affection for the little gypsy girl — but he always did!

The supper was lovely. "*What* is in your pot?" asked Dick, accepting a second helping. "I've never tasted such a delicious stew in my life."

"Chicken, duck, beef, bacon, rabbit, hare, hedgehog, onions, turnips . . ." began Alfredo's wife. "I put there everything that comes. It cooks and I stir, it cooks and I stir. Perhaps a partridge goes in one day, and a pheasant the next, and . . ."

"Hold your tongue, wife," growled Alfredo, who knew quite well that the farmers round about might well ask questions about some of the things in that stew.

"You tell me to hold my tongue!" cried little Mrs. Alfredo angrily, flourishing a spoon.

"Woof," said Timmy, receiving some nice tasty drops on his nose, and licking them off.

"Oh, Aunt Nita, do give Timmy a spoonful out of the stew," begged Jo, and to Timmy's joy he was given a big plateful all to himself.

"Thank you very much for a very nice supper," said Julian, feeling that it really was time to go. He stood up and the others followed his example.

"And thank you for fire-eating for us, Alfredo," said George. "It doesn't spoil your appetite!"

"Poof!" said Alfredo, as if such a thing would never enter his head!

WOLVES IN THE NIGHT!

This extract is from one of the eight books in the Adventure series — THE MOUNTAIN OF ADVENTURE. The four children — Jack, Philip, Dinah and Lucy-Ann — are together for a summer holiday in the mountains of Wales. They set out to camp with David, an old Welsh shepherd, taking donkeys; Kiki, Jack's talkative parrot, goes too, and also Snowy, a tiny kid who will not leave Philip. This extract from THE MOUNTAIN OF ADVENTURE gives the events that lead up to one of the strangest adventures the children have ever had.

THE sun was shining brightly when the camp awoke next day. It made them all feel cheerful and lively. Snowy, the kid, who had resented the shepherd David sleeping with Philip and Jack the night before, and had butted him continually, bounded about lightly everywhere, rushing at David whenever he met him.

"What happened to you last night, David?" asked Jack, when they were all having a meal. "Why were you so frightened?"

"Noises," said David.

"What sort?" asked Philip curiously. "*We* didn't hear any."

David immediately made some surprising noises that sent Kiki, the parrot, sailing into the air and Snowy bounding away in fright. The children stared at David in astonishment.

By means of odd words and gestures David managed to convey to the children that he had gone to see if the donkeys were all right in the night, and had heard these noises near where they were tethered.

"That explains why *we* didn't hear them, I suppose," said Jack. "David makes them sound like animal noises — fierce and savage!"

Lucy-Ann looked scared. "Oh! You don't think

there are wild animals anywhere about here, do you, Jack? I mean, *fierce* wild animals?"

Jack grinned. "Well, if you are thinking of lions and tigers and panthers and bears, I think I can say you needn't be afraid of finding *those* here. But if, like Dinah, you include snakes, foxes, hedgehogs and so on in your list of fierce wild animals, then I should say, look out!"

"Don't be silly, Jack. Of course I don't mean those," said Lucy-Ann. "I don't quite know what I *did* mean. I just felt scared — and wondered what animal had made the noises David heard."

"Probably his own imagination," said Philip. "Or a bad dream. It wouldn't take much to scare him."

David did not seem to want to go any further. He kept pointing back over the way they had come. But the children were not going to let their trip come to such a disappointing end. They meant to go and find the Butterfly Valley, if it took them all week! They went to a lot of trouble to make David understand this.

He turned sulky, but mounted his donkey to go with them. Jack now had the map, and examined it very carefully. It was annoying that the Butterfly Valley wasn't marked. Perhaps very few people knew about it.

They all set off across the valley and up into the mountains again. Perhaps the next valley would be the one they wanted, or the one after that. But although they travelled hopefully all the day, they did not find any valley full of butterflies. The children began to think it was all a fairy tale.

There was no track to follow now, though the boys kept a keen look-out in case they should come across one again. When they camped that night, they discussed what they had better do next.

"If we go on any further we shan't know our way back," said Jack. "David would, perhaps, because he was born and bred among mountains, and, like a dog, could follow his own trail well enough, if we had to go back. But he's so brainless that I don't like to trust to him too much. I wouldn't be surprised if he lost the way going back, if we take him much further!"

"Had we better go back then?" asked Lucy-Ann in disappointment.

"Or camp here for a few days," said Jack, looking round. "It's quite a good place."

They were halfway up a steep mountain that rose very sharply from where they were, and looked quite unclimbable.

"What a queer mountain!" said Dinah, gazing up. "I shouldn't think anyone ever climbed all the way to the top. It's all crags and rocks and jutting-out bits."

"We'll camp here," decided Philip. "The weather looks quite settled. There's a spring near by. We can mess about with our cameras and field-glasses."

They told David. He did not seem pleased, but went off to tether the donkeys for the night. They were all tired that evening, children and donkeys both, for they had had a very long day. They cut the big ham that Mrs. Evans had provided for them, afraid that it might go bad if they didn't eat it soon.

David looked as if he thought he would sleep in the tent again that night, for he cast various longing glances in that direction. However, the night was hot, and he felt he couldn't bear to be

David shot into the boys' tent and gave them a terrible shock.

under cover. So he arranged himself under his rug in the open, fairly near to the two tents. The donkeys were some way away, tethered to trees by long ropes.

That night there was a loud snuffling around the camp. Lucy-Ann awoke suddenly and heard it. She went right down to the bottom of her sleep ing-bag, frightened. What could it be? Was it the wild animal that David had heard?

Then she heard a howl! The boys heard it too, and awoke. David, outside, was already awake, having heard both the noises. He was shivering with fright, all kinds of fears coming into his simple, peasant mind.

The moon was up and everywhere was silvery bright. David sat up and looked down the hill. What he saw made his hair rise straight up on his head.

Wolves! A pack of wolves! No, no, it couldn't be wolves! He was dreaming! Wolves had not been known in the mountains for hundreds of years. But if those creatures were not wolves, what were they? And that noise of snuffling he had heard. That must have been a wolf, too! No, not a a *wolf*. It *couldn't* have been such a thing.

David sat there, hugging his knees, his mind going round and round — wolves or not? Wolves or not? What were they doing near the donkeys?

Another howl came — half a howl, half a bark, a horrible noise. The shepherd shot into the boys' tent and gave them a terrible shock.

He stammered something in Welsh, and then in English, "Wolves!"

"Don't be silly," said Jack at once, seeing that the man was scared to death. "You've had a bad dream."

David dragged him to the tent opening and pointed with a trembling finger to where the pack of snuffling animals stood, not far from the donkeys.

The boys stared as if they could not believe their eyes. They certainly *looked* like wolves! Jack felt a cold shiver down his back. Good gracious! Was he dreaming? Those creatures were more like wolves than anything else!

Kiki flew above the animals.

Snowy the kid was trembling as much as David was. The trembling somehow made the boys feel scared too. The only person who was not in the least scared was Kiki, the parrot.

She too had caught sight of the wolves. She sailed out of the tent at top speed to go and investigate. Anything unusual always interested Kiki. She flew above the animals, whose eyes gleamed green as they turned at her coming.

"Wipe your feet!" screamed Kiki, and made a noise like a mowing-machine cutting long grass. It sounded really terrible in the still night air of the mountain-side.

The wolves started in fright. Then with one accord they all galloped away down the hillside into the night. The parrot shouted rude remarks after them.

"They've gone," said Jack. "Gosh, were they real? I can't understand it!"

When it was dawn, David got up to see if the donkeys were all right. Neither he nor the boys had slept again that night. David had been too scared to, and the boys had been too puzzled.

It was almost daylight on the mountain. David crept down quietly to the donkeys. They were all there, safe and sound but uneasy. David untethered them to take them to the stream to drink.

The boys were looking out of their tent, down the hillside, on watch. There was no sign of any wolf now.

Suddenly something happened. David, who was taking the donkeys in a line to the stream, gave a terrified scream, and fell to the ground, covering his face. The boys, holding their breath, thought they saw something moving in the bushes, but they couldn't see what.

David gave another scream and got to his feet. He mounted a donkey and rode at top speed up to the tent.

"Come!" he cried in Welsh, and then in English. "Black, black, black!"

The boys had no idea at all what he meant.

David galloped off at breakneck speed.

They stared at him in amazement, thinking he must have gone mad. He made a violent gesture to them, pointed to the following donkeys as if to tell the boys to mount and follow him, and then galloped off at breakneck speed.

They heard the hooves of his donkey echoing on the mountain-side for some time. The other donkeys looked doubtfully at one another, and then, to the boys' dismay, trotted after David!

"Hi! Come back, you!" yelled Jack, scrambling out of the tent. "Hi! Hi!"

One donkey turned and made as if to come back, but he was pushed on by the others behind. In a trice they had all disappeared, and the sound of their hooves grew fainter and fainter as they galloped away after David and his mount.

The two boys sat down suddenly. They felt faint. Jack turned pale. He looked at Philip and bit his lip. Now they were in a terrible fix.

They said nothing for a moment or two, and then the girls' two scared faces looked out from their tent.

"What's happened? What's all the yelling? Was that David galloping away? We didn't dare to look!"

"Yes — it was David — running away from us — and all the donkeys have gone after him," said Philip bitterly. "We're in a pretty fix now!"

Nobody said anything. Lucy-Ann looked really alarmed. No David! No donkeys! What were they going to do?

Jack put his arm round her as she came and sat by his side. "It's all right! We've been in worse fixes than this! At the worst it only means a few days here, because as soon as David gets back to the farm, Bill will come and look for us."

"Good thing we unloaded the donkeys and have plenty of food," said Philip. "And our tents and sleeping-bags. Blow David! He's a coward."

"I wonder what he saw to make him gallop off like that," said Jack. "All I could make out were his shout of 'Black, black, black'!"

"Black what?" asked Dinah.

"Black nothing. Just black," said Jack. "Let's

go down to the place where he got his fright and see if we can spot anything."

"Oh *no*!" said the girls at once.

"Well, I'll go, and Philip can stay here with you," said Jack, and off he went. The others watched him, holding their breath. He peered all round and then turned and shook his head and shouted.

"Nothing here! Not a thing to see! David must have been imagining things! His bad night upset him."

He came back. "But what about those animals in the night?" said Philip, after a pause. "Those wolves. We both saw those. *They* seemed real enough!"

It wasn't long before Dinah suggested having something to eat, and went to the big panniers that had been unloaded from the donkeys the night before. She pulled out some tins, thinking that it would be a change to have sardines, and tinned peaches, or something like that. Anything to take their minds off the shepherd's flight, and the disappearance of the donkeys!

They sat down rather silently. Lucy-Ann kept very close to the boys. What with wolves and David's fright she felt very scared, herself!

"I hope this won't turn into one of our adventures," she kept saying to herself. "They always happen so suddenly."

Snowy the kid bounded up to Philip and knocked a tin flying from his hand. He nuzzled affectionately against him and then butted him. Philip rubbed the furry little nose and then pushed the kid away.

"I'm glad *you* didn't go off with the donkeys, too!" he said. "I've got used to having you around now, you funny aggravating little thing. Take your nose out of that tin! Lucy-Ann, push him off — he'll eat everything we've got!"

Kiki suddenly flew at Snowy, screaming with rage. She had had her eye on that tin of sliced peaches, and to see Snowy nosing round it was too much for her. She gave him a sharp peck on his nose, and he ran to Philip, bleating. Everyone laughed and felt better.

Kiki suddenly flew at Snowy, screaming with rage.

They sat there, eating by the tents, occasionally glancing up at the mountain that towered so steeply above them. It had no gentle slope up to the summit, as most of the mountains around had, but was steep and forbidding.

"I don't much like this mountain," said Lucy-Ann.

"Why?" asked Dinah.

"I don't know. I just don't like it," said Lucy-Ann. "I've got one of my 'feelings' about it."

The others laughed. Lucy-Ann often had 'feelings' about things, and really believed in them. It was just like her to start having 'feelings' about the mountain, when everyone was also having uncomfortable ideas about wolves and other things.

"Well, you needn't have any 'feelings' about mountains," said Philip. "Mountains are all the same — just tops, middles and bottoms, sometimes with sheep on and sometimes without!"

"But not many have *wolves*," said Lucy-Ann seriously, and that made the others feel uncomfortable again.

"What are we going to do today?" asked Jack, when they had finished their meal. "I suppose we *must* stay here till Bill comes to find us. We can't try to walk back home, because for one thing we don't know the way, and for another we'd never be able to carry enough food to get there without starving."

"We'd far better stay here," said Philip at once.

"Yes – it does seem the most sensible thing to do," said Jack. "We've got our camp here — tents set up and everything — so we might as well make the best of it, and enjoy the camping. I wish there was somewhere to bathe though. It's so jolly hot. That little stream's too small to do anything but paddle in."

"Let's all keep together," said Lucy-Ann. "I mean — we could frighten those wolves away perhaps if we screamed at them — but one of us alone might be — might be . . ."

"Gobbled up!" said Jack, and laughed. "What big *eyes* you've got, Granny! And, oh, what big TEETH you've got! Do you feel like Red Riding Hood, Lucy Ann?"

"Don't tease her," said Philip, seeing Lucy-Ann's alarmed face. "It's all right, Lucy-Ann. Wolves are only really hungry in the winter-time and it's summer now."

The children went to splash in the little stream.

Lucy-Ann looked relieved. "Well — I suppose if they'd been really hungry they would have attacked the donkeys, wouldn't they?" she said.

They got up, cleared away the meal and went to splash in the little stream. The wind suddenly began to blow rather chilly, and, looking up, the children saw that big clouds were coming up from the south-west.

"Looks like rain," said Jack. "I hope the wind doesn't get up much more, or it will blow our tents away. Do you remember how they were blown clean away from over us on our last adventure — on the Island of Birds? That was an awful feeling."

"Well," said Philip, "if you really think the tents might blow away, Jack, we ought to find a better place to camp than this — somewhere not too far, though, because we don't want to miss seeing Bill and David when they come for us. A copse of trees or a cave or somewhere like that — right out of the wind."

"Let's look now," said Dinah, pulling on her coat. It was extraordinary how cold it got as soon as the sun went in and the wind blew up the mountain. "We'd better take Snowy with us, or he'll eat everything we've left!"

Snowy had every intention of coming with them. He capered along by Philip and Jack, as mad as ever. He was now very annoyed with Kiki, and leapt at her whenever she came within reach, wanting to pay her back for nipping his nose.

When the girls had been left a little way behind, Philip spoke in a low voice to Jack. "We'd better find a cave, I think, Jack — I don't like the idea of those animals prowling around us at night — wolves, or whatever they are. If we were in a cave we could light a fire at the entrance and that would keep any animal off."

"Yes. That's quite a good idea," agreed Jack.

They hunted about for some kind of rocky shelter or cave, but there seemed none to be found. The mountain was so steep that it really

was difficult to climb, and Lucy-Ann was afraid of slipping and falling.

Snowy leapt ahead of them, as sure-footed as ever. The boys wished heartily that it was as easy for them to leap about the mountain as it was for the kid.

"Look at him up there standing on that rock!" said Jack, feeling exasperated and far too hot with his climbing. "Hey, Snowy, come and give us a leg up! If only we had four springy legs like yours!"

Snowy stood there, whisking his little tail, and then ran back and disappeared. "Where's he gone?" said Jack. "Oh, there he comes again. Philip, there must be a cave or overhanging rock up where he is — he keeps going back and disappearing into it, whatever it is!"

They climbed up to where Snowy was, and sure enough, just at the back of the overhanging rock was a long low cave, its roof formed by another overhanging rock, its opening fringed with ferns of all kinds.

"This would do awfully well for us," said Jack, going down on hands and knees and looking in. "We could light a fire on the rock outside — the one Snowy stood on — and feel quite safe tonight. Clever little Snowy! You found us just what we wanted!"

"But how in the world are we going to get everything up here?" said Philip.

This was certainly a problem. The boys hailed the girls and helped them up on to the rock where Snowy stood. "Look," said Jack, "here's a good place to sleep in tonight. We can see quite well from here if Bill and David come — see what a good view we have from this rock — and we'd be safe from the wolves if we lighted a fire at the entrance to the cave."

"Oh, *yes*!" said Lucy-Ann, pleased. She went into the cave. She had to bend her head at the opening, but inside the roof grew higher. "It's not *really* a cave!" she said. "It's just a space under that big jutting-out rock — but it will do awfully well."

They all sat down on the rock, wishing the sun would come out. Snowy lay down beside them and Kiki sat on Jack's shoulder.

But suddenly she rose up into the air and screeched loudly. Snowy leapt up and stood looking downwards. What was the matter?

"Is it the wolves again?" asked Lucy-Ann in alarm. They listened. They could hear a noise of some animal or animals down below in the thick bushes, under the birch-trees.

Just at the back of the overhanging rock was a long low cave.

"Get back into the cave," said Jack to the girls. "And keep quiet."

The two girls went silently back into the darkness of the cave. The boys listened and watched. What animal was it down there? It must be big, by the noise it made!

Snowy suddenly bleated loudly nad took a flying leap off the rock before Philip could stop him. He disappeared into the bushes below — and then a loud and welcome sound filled the air.

"Ee-ore! Ee-ore! Ee-ore!"

"Goodness! It's a donkey!" cried Jack and scrambled down to see. "Have they come back? Is David with them?"

They soon found what they were looking for. Dapple the donkey was in the bushes, nuzzling Snowy, evidently full of delight at seeing him again. But there was no sign at all of the other donkeys or of David.

"Dapple! You darling!" said Lucy-Ann, running up to him in joy. "You've come back to us."

"Come back to *Snowy*, you mean!" said Philip. "He was always fond of Snowy, weren't you, Dapple? So you came back to find him. Well, we're very glad to see you, because you will solve a very knotty problem for us — how to get all our goods into that cave!"

"Here, Dapple!" called Philip. "Come and help us with these things, there's a good fellow."

Dapple stood obediently whilst the boys strapped things on to his back. He took all the bedding up to the cave first, scrambling up the steep bits with difficulty, but managing very well indeed. Then he carried up the panniers of food.

"Thanks, Dapple," said Jack, giving him a pat. "Now come and have a drink!"

They all went to the stream and drank and splashed. The sun had come out again and immediately it was very hot. The children flung off their coats and lay about, basking.

"We must collect wood for the fire tonight," said Jack. "We shall need a good lot if we're going to keep the fire going all night long. We'll stack it in the big panniers and get Dapple to take it up for us."

"Good old Dapple," said Dinah.

They collected as much wood as they could, and soon it was all piled up on the rock outside the cave. The boys made a fire but did not light it. There was no need to do that till night.

The day soon went, and the sun sank behind the mountains in a blaze of crimson. As soon as darkness fell on the mountain-side, the children retired into the cave. The thought of wolves kept coming into their mind, and they kept remembering David's scream of terror when he had seen something in the bushes. "Black, black, black!" What *could* he have seen?

The children hadn't thought much of these things during the bright daylight, but they came back vividly into their minds now it was dark. They debated whether or not to have Dapple in the cave with them.

But Dapple settled that idea by firmly refusing to go under the overhanging rock.

"All right, Dapple," said Jack crossly. "Stay outside and be eaten by wolves if you want to!"

"Oh, *don't* say things like that," said Lucy-Ann. "Dapple, do come inside! Please!"

Dapple lay down firmly outside, and the children gave it up. There would be no difficulty about Snowy or Kiki. One would want to be with Philip, the other with Jack.

"Now we'll light the fire," said Jack, as stars began to glimmer in the sky. "It's getting very dark. Got the matches, Philip?"

The fire soon burnt up, for the twigs and branches were very dry. The cheerful flames leapt and flickered, and the fire crackled merrily.

"That's very very nice," said Lucy-Ann, pleased. "I feel safe tucked away in this cave with a fire at the entrance. Philip, make Snowy go the other side of you. He's sticking his hooves into me. I wish he'd wear bedroom slippers at night!"

Everybody laughed. They all felt safe and comfortable, tucked up in their sleeping-bags, with the fire lighting up the cave, filling it with jumping shadows. Snowy was pressed against Philip, Kiki was on Jack's middle. Somewhere outside was Dapple. Lucy-Ann wished he was in with them, then the whole family would be safe.

They all watched the flames for a while and then fell asleep. The fire flickered down as the wood was burnt up, and soon only the embers glowed.

Philip woke up with a start a few hours later. He saw that the fire had died down, and he crawled out of his sleeping-bag to put on more wood. It would never do to let it go out!

Dapple was still outside, lying quietly. Philip saw him when the flames leapt up to burn the wood he piled on the embers. The boy went

back to his sleeping-bag. He found that Snowy had crept inside it whilst he was piling wood on the fire.

There was quite a scuffle as he tried to get Snowy out of the bag. Fortunately the others were so very sound asleep that they didn't wake. Philip got Snowy out at last and slid in himself. He hastily laced up the neck of the bag before Snowy could try to squeeze in again. Snowy gave a sigh and lay down heavily right on Philip's middle.

Philip lay awake, watching the fire. The wind sometimes blew the smoke towards the cave, and for a moment or two the smell made Philip want to cough.

Then he heard Dapple stir outside, and he sat up on one elbow to see why. His heart began to beat very fast.

Silent dark figures were slinking up to the cave! They did not pass beyond the fire, but they did not seem to be afraid of it. Philip felt breathless, and his heart beat even faster, as if he had been running.

What were those figures? Were they wolves? The boy caught sight of two gleaming eyes, shining like the headlights of a distant car — but green as grass! He sat up quietly.

The wolves were back! They had smelt out the little company. What would they do? They had not attacked Dapple, thank goodness — and the donkey did not seem to be unduly frightened. He was only moving uneasily.

The slinking figures moved to and fro behind the fire. Philip couldn't think what in the world to do! He could only hope that the fire would frighten them enough to keep them out of the cave.

After a while all the animals disappeared. Philip breathed again! Gosh, what a horrible fright he had had! What a blessing they had thought of that fire! Philip made up his mind that he wasn't going to sleep again that night, in case the fire went out. At all costs he must keep that up.

So the boy lay awake, thinking of wolves, rumblings, earthquakes and "Black, black, black." There was something queer about all these things. Did they fit together, or didn't they? *Was* there something peculiar about this mountain?

The fire was dying down again. Philip got up cautiously to put on more wood. The moon was up now and he could see for miles. He piled wood on the fire and the flames shot up. He slipped out of the cave to Dapple, the donkey.

Then the boy heard a sound. He looked up — and to his horror he saw a wolf between him and the cave! He had gone to pat Dapple — and in that moment the wolf had slunk in between the fire and cave. Would he go in?

The wolf stood still, looking at Philip in the moonlight. Philip gazed back, wondering what to do if the creature attacked him — and as he looked, a very peculiar thing happened.

The wolf wagged its long tail! To and fro it went, to and fro, like a big dog's! Philip's heart leapt. The animal wanted to be friendly! All animals were attracted to Philip — but a wolf! That was extraordinary.

The boy held out his hand, half afraid, but bold and daring. The wolf trotted round the fire and licked Philip's hand. It gave a little whine.

The moon shone down brightly on the animal's dark coat, pointed ears and long muzzle. *Was* it a wolf? Now that he was close to it Philip began to doubt.

And then quite suddenly he knew what this friendly animal was!

"Why, you're an Alsatian *dog*!" he cried. "Aren't you? Why didn't I think of it before? I *knew* there weren't wolves in this country! Where are the others? You're all Alsatians! Good dog! Fine dog! I'd like to be friends with you!"

The big Alsatian put his paws up on Philip's shoulder and licked his face. Then he lifted his head and howled. It was a wolf-like noise, but Philip no longer minded that!

It was a call to the other dogs, the rest of the pack. There came the sound of feet in the bushes

below, and a crowd of dogs leapt up on to the rock. They clustered round Philip, and, seeing that their leader was so friendly with the boy, they pawed him and licked him.

The howl awakened all the three children in the cave, and they sat up in fright. To their unspeakable horror they saw, outside the cave, what looked like Philip being attacked by wolves!

"Look! They've got Philip! Quick!" yelled Jack.

All three children slid out of their sleeping-bags and rushed to Philip's aid. The dogs growled at the sudden commotion.

"Philip! We're coming! Are you hurt?" cried valiant little Lucy-Ann, picking up a stick.

"It's all right, it's all right!" yelled Philip. "They're not attacking me. They're friendly. They're not wolves, but Alsatians! *Dogs*, you know!"

"Goodness gracious!" said Dinah, and came out into the moonlight, so glad that the dogs were not wolves that she didn't even feel afraid of so many big ones!

A crowd of dogs leapt up on to the rock.

"Oh, Philip!" said Lucy-Ann, almost in tears with the shock of delight at knowing the wolves were only dogs. "Oh, Philip! I thought you were being attacked."

"You were a darling to come to my rescue then," said Philip, smiling when he saw the little stick with which Lucy-Ann had meant to attack the wolves. "The leader of the dogs made friends with me — so all the others are doing the same!"

The dogs had apparently made up their minds to stay for the night. Philip debated what to do. "We can't possibly go back into the cave," he said. "The whole pack will come crowding in, and it would be impossible to breathe."

"Quite impossible," said Dinah, filled with horror at the thought of so many dogs sleeping with them.

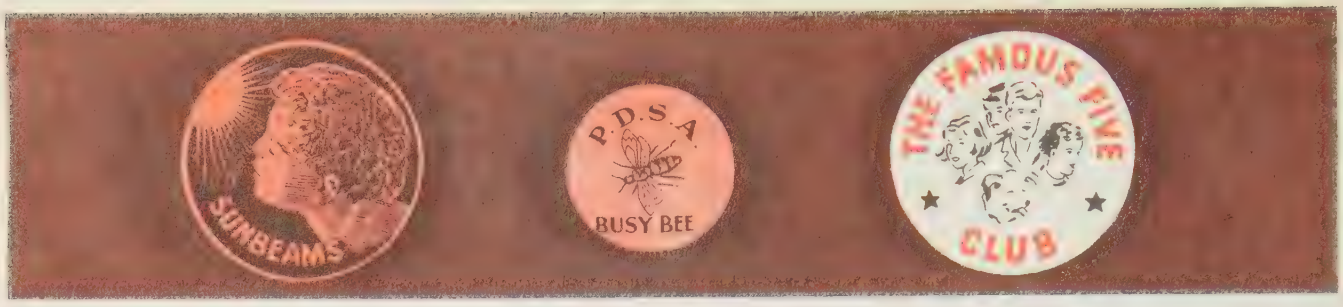
"So we'll bring our sleeping-bags out here on the rock beside Dapple, and sleep there," said Philip. "The dogs can stay if they want to — they'll be good guards! And if they don't want to, they can go. There are about ten of them! I wonder how it is they're wandering about here wild. Ten of them! It's extraordinary."

They dragged out their sleeping-bags, and slid into them. The dogs sniffed round in wonder. The leader sat majestically down by Philip, as if to say, "This boy is my property. Keep off!" The others lay about among the children. Snowy was afraid of the big leader-dog and dare not even go near his beloved Philip. He went to Jack instead. Kiki stayed up in a tree. There were altogether too many dogs for her!

It was a curious sight the moon looked down on that night: four children, one goat, one parrot, one donkey — and ten dogs!

But what had frightened David? And what were ten Alsatian dogs doing in the mountains? You can read the rest of the story in the complete book:

THE MOUNTAIN OF ADVENTURE.



Enid Blyton's Three Clubs for Children

There are three Clubs that were started by the late Enid Blyton for those readers of her books who feel that they would like to continue the work she began for sick or blind children, and with sick or injured animals.

Now about the Three Clubs, and how to join one or more of them.

First, THE FAMOUS FIVE CLUB, which helps with the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children. To join, and get your badge with the heads of the Five on it, send a 1s postal order, and an envelope addressed to yourself, inside an envelope addressed to FAMOUS FIVE CLUB, Arlen House, Salisbury Road, Leicester.

You will be interested to know that we have an Enid Blyton bed at this hospital and hope to have several more in course of time, as well as an Enid Blyton bus to take the sick children on outings.

THE SUNBEAM SOCIETY. This is the Youth Section of the great R.N.I.B. — The Royal National Institute for the Blind. Children belonging to this club help with the Sunshine Homes for Blind Babies. Here we take babies and young blind children, and have well over 33,000 members. Our badge is a yellow one, showing the head of a blind child turning towards the sun. To join, send a 1s postal order for the badge, and a 4d stamp for postage, to The Sunbeam Society, R.N.I.B., 224, Great Portland Street, London W. 1.

THE BUSY BEES. This is the oldest and largest of the three clubs, and has about 300,000 members. All are animal lovers, and our badge is yellow, with a bee on it. We help to raise funds for our animal dispensaries, and have our own Busy Bees Van which goes about the countryside, healing and helping animals of any kind, free. If you love animals, do join. We have our own magazine each month, called "The Busy Bees News". To join the Club send 6d in stamps to Junior Branch, P. D. S. A. House, South Street, Dorking, Surrey. If you would like to have the magazine for a year send an 8s 6d postal order; for six months send a 4s 3d postal order.

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Teas

Here are some of the stories by Enid Blyton which children have liked the best. They are collected in this, *My Favourite* Enid Blyton *Story Book*, so that they can be enjoyed over and over again by children everywhere.